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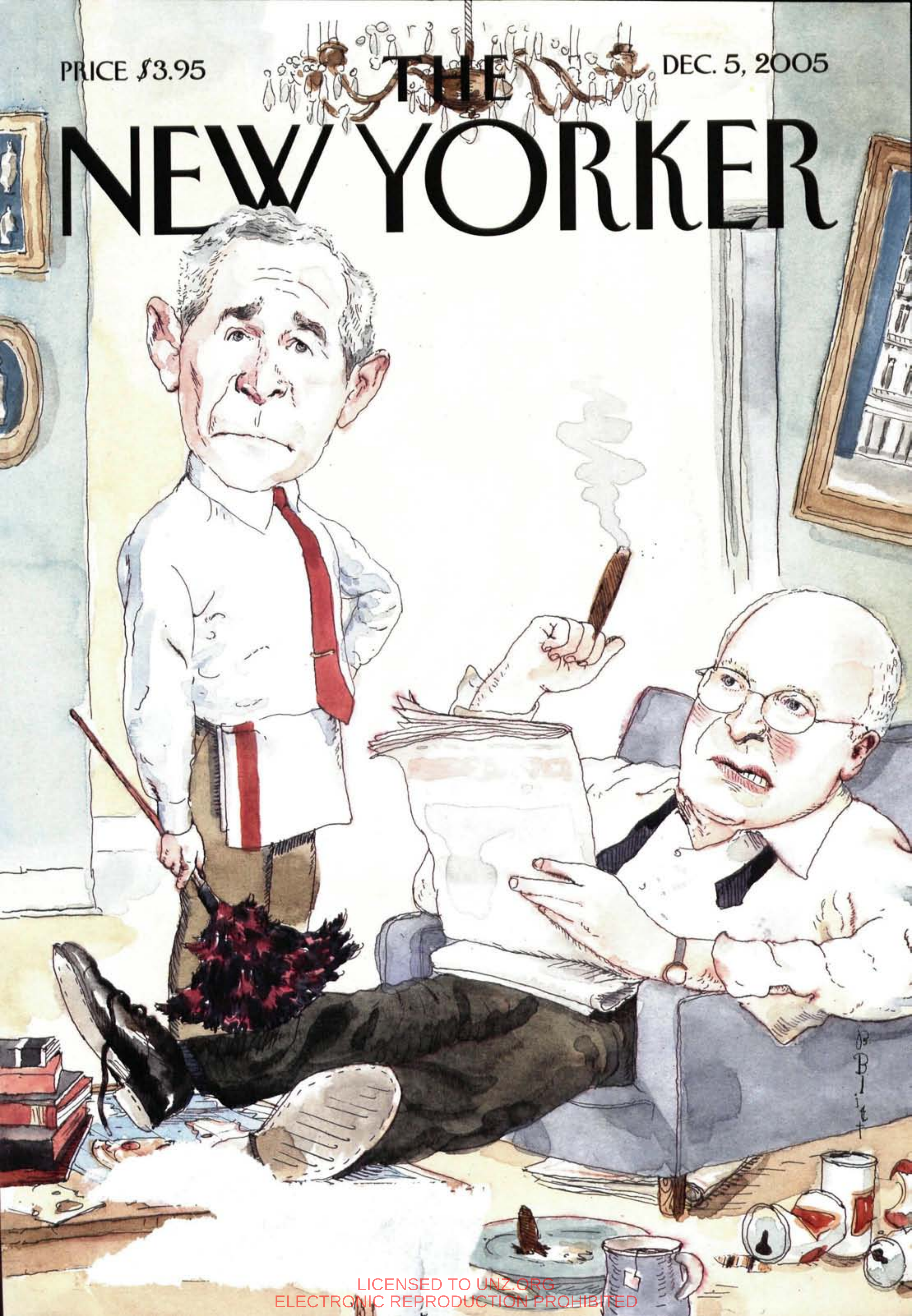

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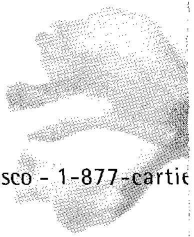

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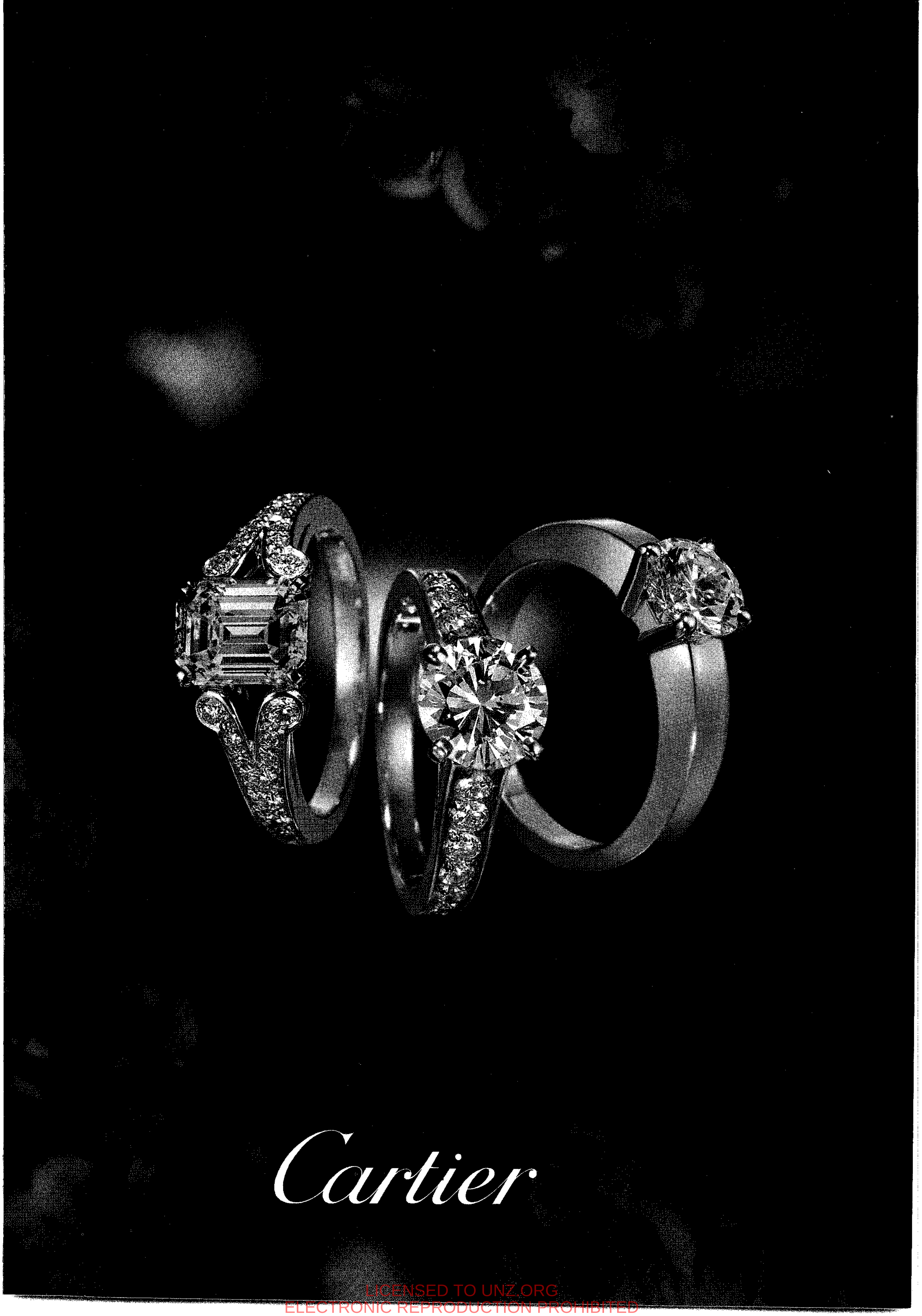

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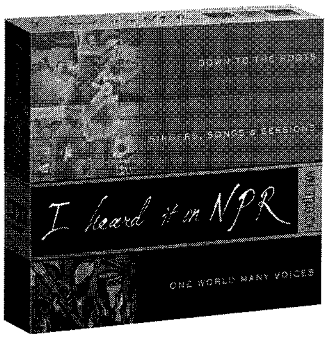

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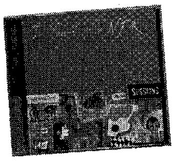

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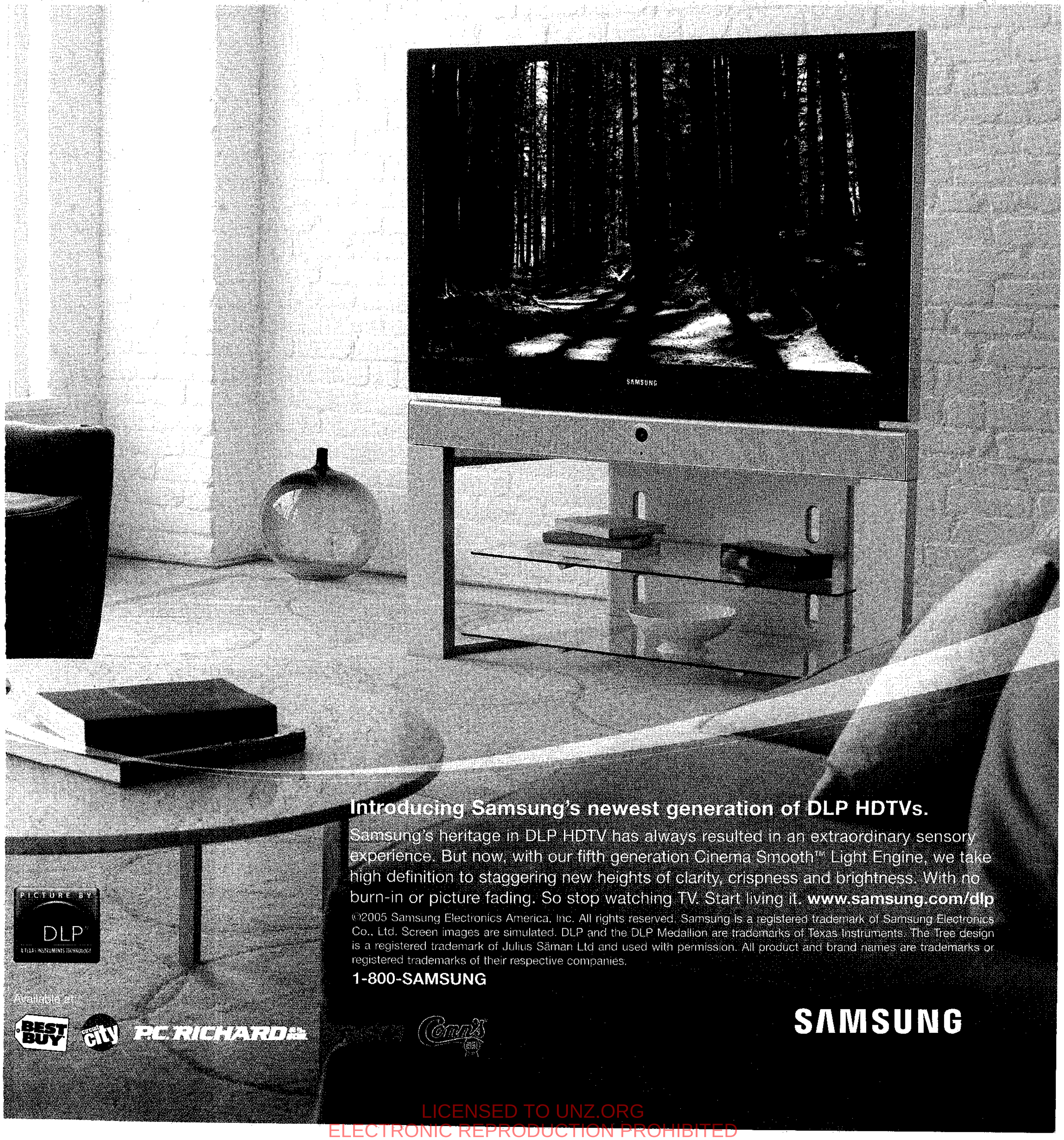
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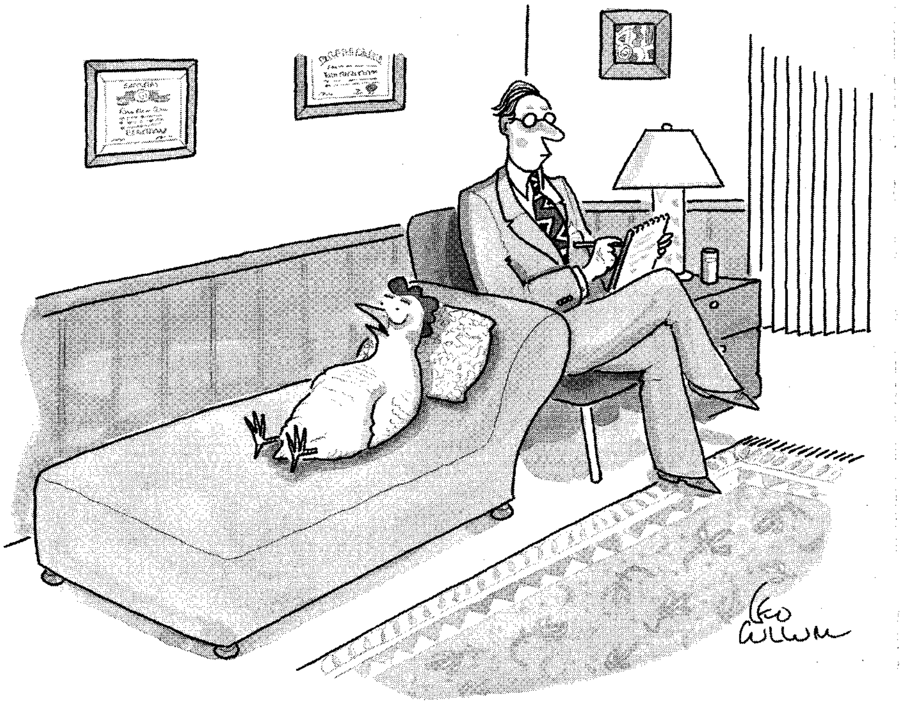
John Lahr (The Theatre, p. 102), the magazine's senior theatre critic, is the author of, most recently, "Honky Tonk Parade: *New Yorker* Profiles of Show People." ♦



"It's that same dream, where I'm drowning in a bowl of noodles."

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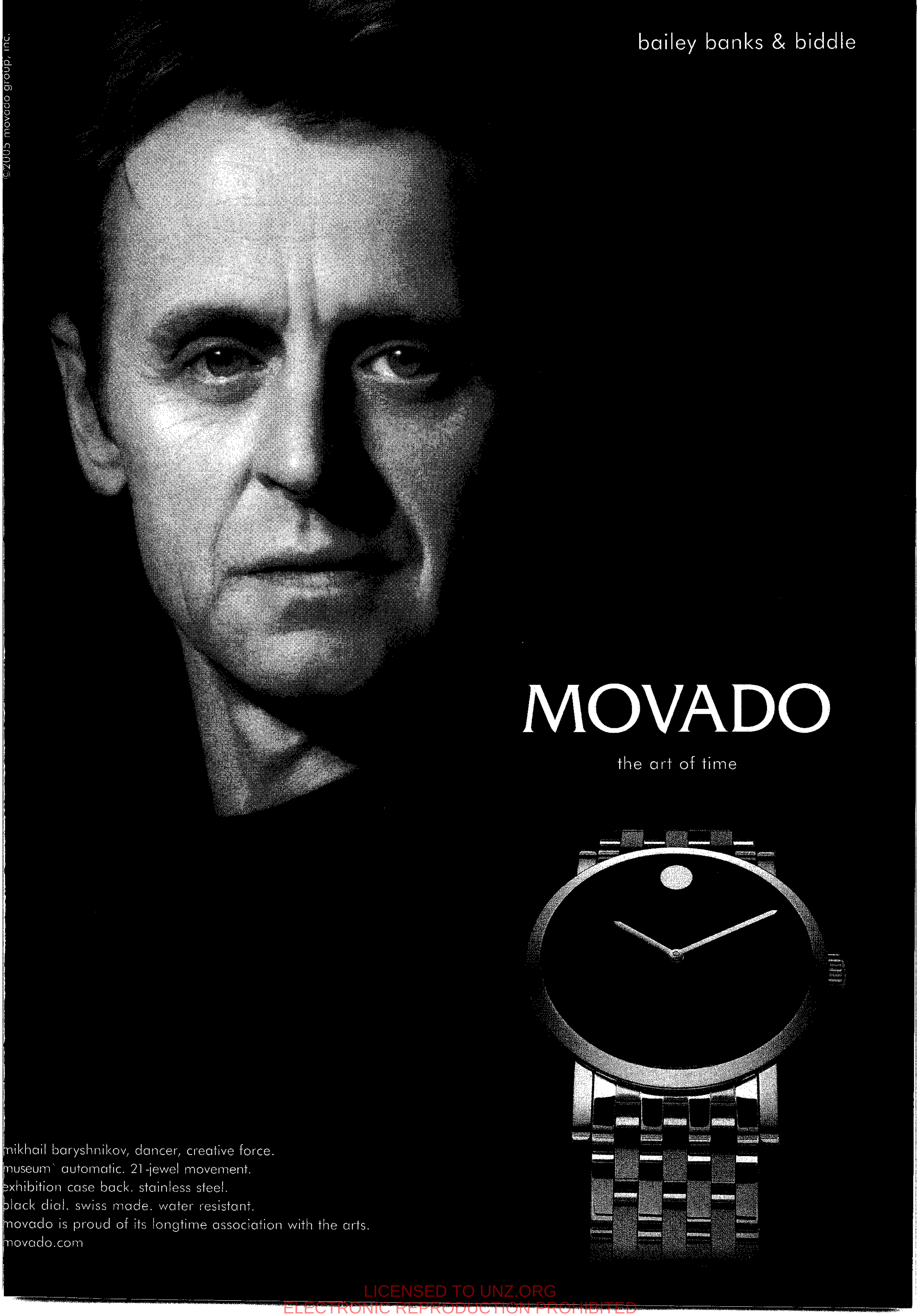
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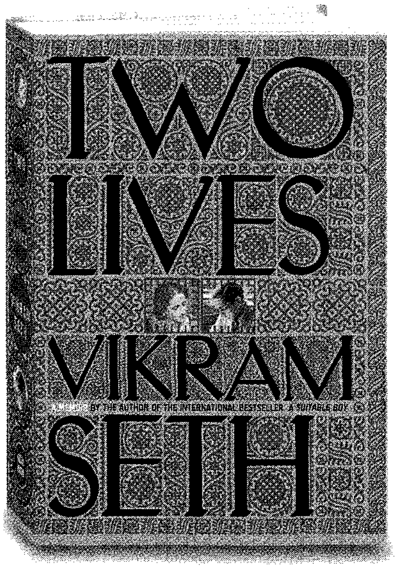
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SETTING PRECEDENT

The Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer's response to the quotation from my decision excluding the words "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance seems to suggest that my complaint over the lack of guidance offered by the Supreme Court was a personal one ("Breyer's Big Idea," by Jeffrey Toobin, October 31st). The intention, however, was to note an institutional problem. The linchpin of our judicial system is stare decisis, and it is important to understand the problems engendered by Justice Breyer's notion that it suffices for the Supreme Court to teach by example instead of by articulating rules of law. As I wrote in the footnote that Toobin partially quoted, regarding the recent Supreme Court decision on religious displays, "Because the doctrine is inherently a boundary-less slippery slope, any conclusion might pass muster. It might be remembered that it was only a little more than one hundred years ago that the Supreme Court of this nation declared without hesitation, after reviewing the history of religion in this country, that 'this is a Christian nation.'" Thus one could argue that there is precedent to permit the substitution of the words "under Christ" for "under God." It is surely a preposterous interpretation, but one not ruled out by the subjective standards of current First Amendment doctrine.

Lawrence K. Karlton
Senior Judge, United States District Court, Eastern District of California
Sacramento, Calif.

Originalists offer their doctrine as a remedy for the problem of judges interpreting the Constitution. Yet the meaning of the Constitution has always been disputed. Jefferson and Hamilton disagreed in 1791 over whether Congress had the authority to establish the Bank of the United States, and Jefferson was later infuriated by Chief Justice John Marshall's assertion, in Marbury v. Madison, that the Court had the power to strike down laws passed by Congress. The problem lies in language itself, which mixes vagueness with precision. But judicial restraint is important whether one advocates for present meaning or for original meaning, and a judge who gives the Constitution's words contemporary sense may argue as consistently as Scalia or Bork.

Don Stoll
Ben Lomond, Calif.

Toobin's profile omits the fact that Breyer was a primary architect of the United States Sentencing Guidelines, under which federal judges were precluded, except in the most extreme circumstances, from considering a defendant's age, education, mental or physical condition, employment history, or family responsibilities. Although these guidelines are no longer mandatory, they are an important part of Breyer's legacy, as many people are still serving sentences imposed under this heartless regime.

John P. Pucci
Northampton, Mass.

PARTY POLITICS

George Packer has set out a comprehensive strategy for the Democrats (Comment, October 24th). Unfortunately, what he identifies as the Republicans' weaknesses aren't endemic to just their Party. For instance, he writes, "On issue after issue, government by cronyism and corruption has sacrificed the interests of the middle class to those of the Administration's wealthy friends." But the Democrats long ago abandoned their causes of environmentalism and universal health care in favor of pursuing big business. Given the general rightward drift of the United States since the Second World War, it is unclear whether a Democratic Administration would be much different from the current one.

John Gizzi
Seattle, Wash.

•

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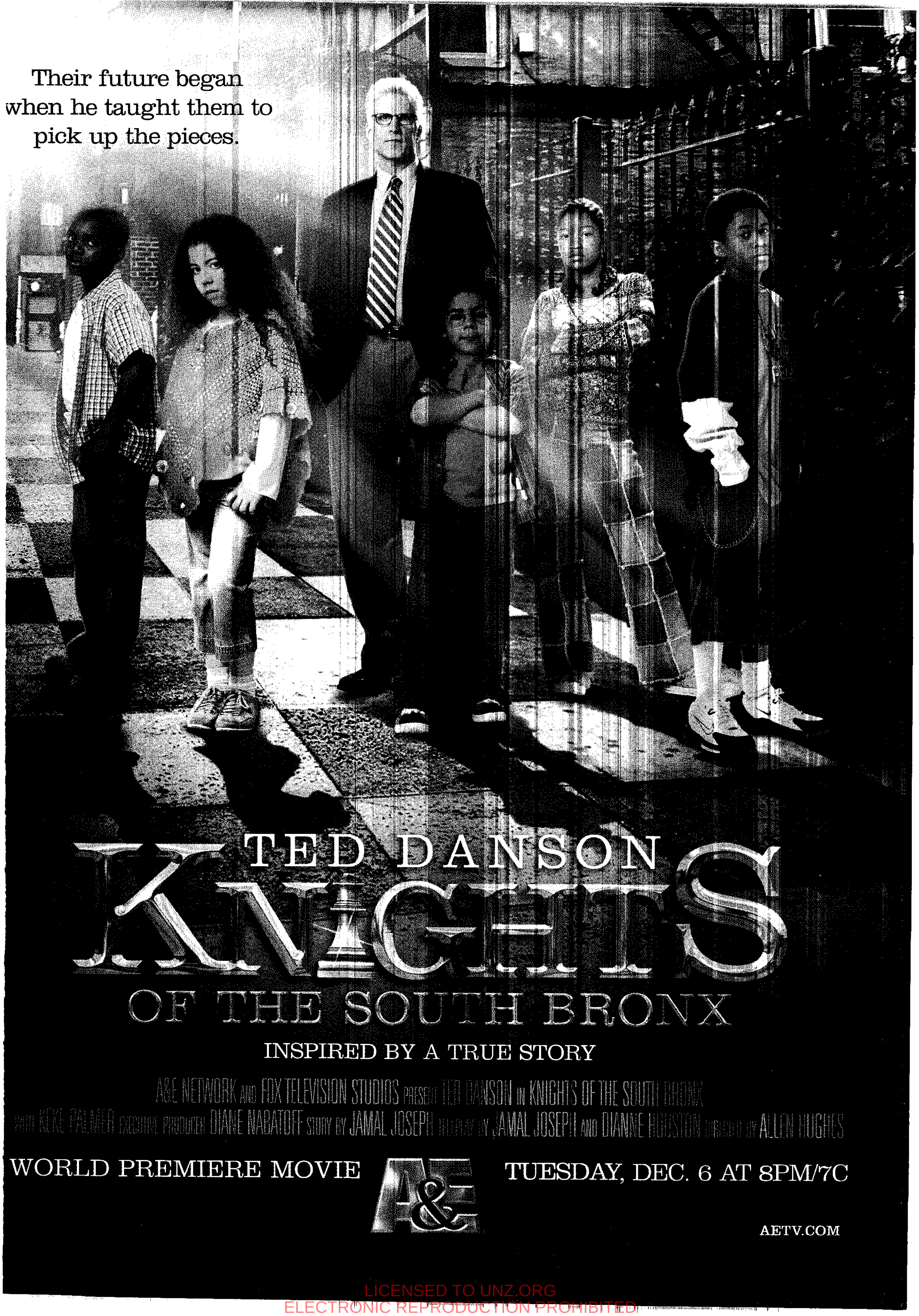

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
RETURN TRIP

Horton Foote, born in Wharton, Texas, in 1916, began as an actor and started writing plays so he could have better roles. His play "The Trip to Bountiful," starring Lois Smith, opens the Signature's fifteenth-anniversary season. (See page 10.)

NIGHT LIFE
AT A GALLOP

Patti Smith, the unofficial poet laureate of punk rock, celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of her first record, "Horses," at the Brooklyn Academy of Music by performing the entire album. She'll be backed by the guitarist Tom Verlaine, a longtime collaborator; the bassist Flea, of the Red Hot Chili Peppers; and others. (See page 12.)

ART
LA BELLE FRANCE

Most of the hundred works on paper in "Clouet to Seurat: French Drawings from the British Museum" have never visited the United States before. This rare travelling exhibition, at the Metropolitan Museum through Jan. 29, will include delicate portraits by Watteau and Degas, Daumier's sharp observations of nineteenth-century Paris, and Seurat's studies for "La Grande Jatte." (See page 14.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
IN CHAMBERS

The Brentano String Quartet, performing Schubert's "Death and the Maiden," inaugurates a series of one-hour chamber-music concerts at the Baryshnikov Arts Center. The show is laid back and salon style; refreshments will be served before and after the performance. (See page 24.)

MOVIES
TROPICAL CURRENTS

Nelson Pereira dos Santos is widely considered the father of Cinema Novo, Brazil's politically engaged new wave of the sixties. Through Dec. 20, BAM offers "A Popular Cinema," a selection of his early work, including his first feature, "Rio 40 Graus," from 1955, made on the streets of Rio de Janeiro with nonactors, and "How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman," a comedy about cannibalism, from 1971. (See page 29.)

The male chorus Chanticleer, at the Metropolitan Museum. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

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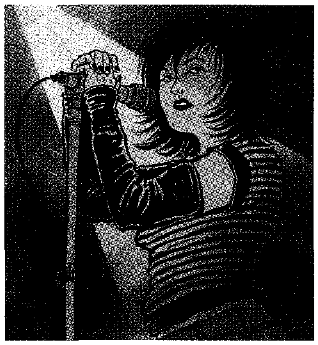

YUKO SHIMIZU

The five musicians from Seattle who play in the rock band Pretty Girls Make Graves like to amble onstage, make small talk, and then disappear into the eye of their own storm, where they are lashed by random time signatures and phrases and it seems as though something terrible could happen at any moment. The group's singer, Andrea Zollo, is a tiny bundle of confidence and fury, pumping her leg while gripping a microphone stand. She holds her own, at least, next to the six-foot-six bassist, Derek Fudesco, who keeps moving during every moment of every song. Despite the name, the band was once all-male save for Zollo, but following the departure of the guitarist Nathan Thelen they have added Leona Marrs, who plays keyboards, saxophone, and accordion. For any other loud rock band, the addition of the accordion might be a reason for concern. But Pretty Girls Make Graves, who appear at the Knitting Factory on Dec. 5 and at Warsaw on Dec. 6, will find a way to make it vital and deadly at the same time. It's the kind of thing they do.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ABIGAIL'S PARTY
The New Group ("Avenue Q") presents the New York première of Mike Leigh's biting satire of British suburbia in the seventies, starring Jennifer Jason Leigh. Scott Elliott directs. In previews. Opens Dec. 1. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

CELEBRATION / THE ROOM
Neil Pepe directs two plays by the Nobel laureate Harold Pinter as part of the Atlantic Theatre Company's twentieth-anniversary season. "Celebration," from 1999, is about a wedding anniversary in a trendy restaurant, and "The Room," Pinter's first play, is set in a one-room London flat. In previews. Opens Dec. 5. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

CHITA RIVERA: THE DANCER'S LIFE
Rivera, along with a cast of ten, stars in a musical about her life and career, touching on shows by Jerome Robbins, Leonard Bernstein, and Bob Fosse. With a book by Terrence McNally and original songs by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty. Directed and choreographed by Graciela Daniele. In previews. (Shoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE COLOR PURPLE
A new musical based on Alice Walker's novel, with a book by Marsha Norman and music and lyrics by Brenda Russell, Allee Willis, and Stephen Bray. Directed by Gary Griffin. In previews. Opens Dec. 1. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

DOG SEES GOD: CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE BLOCKHEAD
Eddie Kaye Thomas, Eliza Dushku, America Ferrera, and Ian Somerhalder star in this tale about a grown-up cartoon character whose world is populated by a motley crew of comic-strip personalities. Directed by Trip Cullman. Previews begin Dec. 1. (Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

HIS ROYAL HIPNESS LORD BUCKLEY IN THE ZAM ZAM ROOM
Jake Broder embodies the cult humorist Lord Buckley, in a play that incorporates several of Buckley's famous routines, set to live jazz accompaniment. Opens Nov. 30. (59 E. 59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE OTHER SIDE
Manhattan Theatre Club presents Ariel Dorfman's story about a couple living on the border of two war-ravaged countries as they await the return of their son, who ran away thirty years earlier. In previews. Opens Dec. 6. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

ROPE
The Drama Dept. presents the play that the Alfred Hitchcock movie was based on, about two Oxford students who commit a murder to prove they can get away with it. Directed by David Warren. In previews. Opens Dec. 4. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

SUPER VISION
A multidisciplinary work, about information anxiety in the digital age, by the New York troupe Builders Association. Nov. 30-Dec. 3. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

A TOUCH OF THE POET
Gabriel Byrne stars as Cornelius Melody, an Irish immigrant who poses as a gentleman in Boston circa 1828, in a Roundabout Theatre production of the Eugene O'Neill play. In previews. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL
Signature Theatre Company presents Horton Foote's play about a strong-willed sixty-year-old woman (Lois Smith) who escapes her stifling life in Houston and embarks on a journey to return to her girlhood home in a small Texas town. Harris Yulin directs. In previews. Opens Dec. 4. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

NOW PLAYING

BEYOND THE MIRROR
Shadow theatre, film, puppetry, and other performance media are used to recall the sociopolitical crises in Afghanistan over the past twenty years, in a production that originated in Kabul. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave. 212-254-1109. Through Dec. 4.)

THE GENTLEMAN DANCING-MASTER
In the New York première of William Wycherley's merry 1672 Restoration comedy, briskly directed by Gus Kaikkonen, Mr. James Formal (Dan Daily) comes home to London in a Spanish doublet, calling himself Don Diego and speaking with an Iberian lisp. He's intent on marrying off his sheltered but frisky daughter, Hippolita, to her English cousin—until the cousin, Monsieur de Paris (the hilarious Sean McNall), shows up in a cravat, pantaloons, and a pink wig. The ensuing battle of the fops is filled with terrific comic setups and nimble repartee; even a sprawling last half can't derail the lively good fun. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

HAMLET
In the Classic Stage Company's unique, if not entirely successful, production, the director, Brian Kulick, has managed to bring a fresh perspective to the play. Unfortunately, the casting does not live up to the scenic elements. Despite his physical grace and energy, the forty-seven-year-old Michael Cumpsty is too old to play Shakespeare's man-child trying to make sense of a world that is not of his own making. Similarly miscast is Kellie Overbey, as Ophelia. The show's unexpected high point is Caroline Lagerfelt, as Gertrude, who works hard to reveal the fundamental innocence of this mother in a household of men at war, and projects grace and understanding in a milieu that understands neither. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/28/05.) (136 E. 13th St. 212-677-4210.)

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF PIER PAOLO PASOLINI
This play, by Michel Azama, explores the tumultuous life of the Italian poet and filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini, who was murdered by a young male prostitute in 1975. (Abingdon Theatre, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444. Through Dec. 4.)

MISS WITHERSPOON
In a new play by Christopher Durang ("Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You"), Kristine Nielsen stars as a sardonic dead woman who is repeatedly reincarnated, much to her chagrin. Directed by Emily Mann. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

MR. MARMALADE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents the New York première of Noah Haidle's comedy. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE RUBY SUNRISE
The artistic director of the Public, Oskar Eustis, directs this play by Rinne Groff. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Through Dec. 4.)

SEASCAPE
Edward Albee's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, directed by Mark Lamos, about two couples who meet on a beach and contemplate life, death, and consciousness. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SISTER AND MISS LEXIE
David Kaplan and Brenda Currin bring together the characters of two Eudora Welty works, "Why I Live at the P.O." and "Losing Battles," in a play set to the music of Beethoven. Currin also stars and Kaplan directs. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

SOUVENIR
In Stephen Temperley's troubling new play (at the Lyceum), Judy Kaye's portrayal of the life and career of Florence Foster Jenkins, the famously bad singer who became a camp legend in New York before the Second World War, is so real and so heartbreaking that one hardly notices the cheap shots that the director, Vivian Matalon, levels at his heroine. Temperley, instead of explaining how Jenkins became the rage, concentrates on her obliviousness of her own camp appeal, and Matalon, more often than not, gives us a caricature. But

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Kaye, a wise performer, shows us the gorgeous folly that goes into making a work of art. (11/21/05) (149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SWEENEY TODD
Under the bold direction and design of John Doyle, this imported British revival at the Eugene O'Neill, which shrinks the cast of thirty to ten, with actors doubling as musicians, is almost unbearably exciting. With eight chairs, a coffin, and a ladder, Doyle conjures up a universe of woe and wonder; the actors are not just characters and musicians—they are also the scenery. Sweeney (Michael Cerveris), who was transported to Australia for fifteen years on a trumped-up charge by a judge who lusted after his wife, returns to London in disguise to find his wife apparently dead and his beloved daughter (Lauren Molina) the ward of the very judge who sent him away. Cerveris is a terrifying Sweeney, a model of sulfurous restraint. Patti LuPone, as his pragmatic and pathological helpmate, Mrs. Lovett, is a gargoyle of toughness, and positively Weimar. As life and theatre have taught us, there is no escape from the power of the perverse. (11/14/05) (230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

WAITING FOR GODOT
Commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the play's Broadway première, Alan Hruska's production is a wash: tedious, pedantic, and entirely lacking in the Laurel-and-Hardy humor that was essential to Samuel Beckett's vision of a demystified world. The only person here who gets it is Martin Shakar, who, playing Lucky as a slave who wouldn't know what to do with himself if he weren't indentured, mimes his part with a kind of defeated grace. (11/28/05) (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE WOMAN IN WHITE
In Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest offering, adapted by Charlotte Jones from Wilkie Collins's creepy nineteenth-century novel and directed by Trevor Nunn, Collins's Victorian interest in depth of character has been replaced by ominous-sounding music, fog machines, and a gothic set. The story involves a drawing teacher (Adam Brazier) and his two pupils, the lively Marian (Maria Friedman, who is by far the best thing in the show) and her half sister, Laura (Jill Paice), all of whom are haunted by a thin, pale young woman dressed in white (Angela Christian), who may or may not be a ghost. It's not easy to judge the actors or the play because they're all of a piece, and the score and the lyrics (by David Zippel) are so over-the-top dramatic that it's impossible to have real feeling for any of the characters, let alone their situations. (11/28/05) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

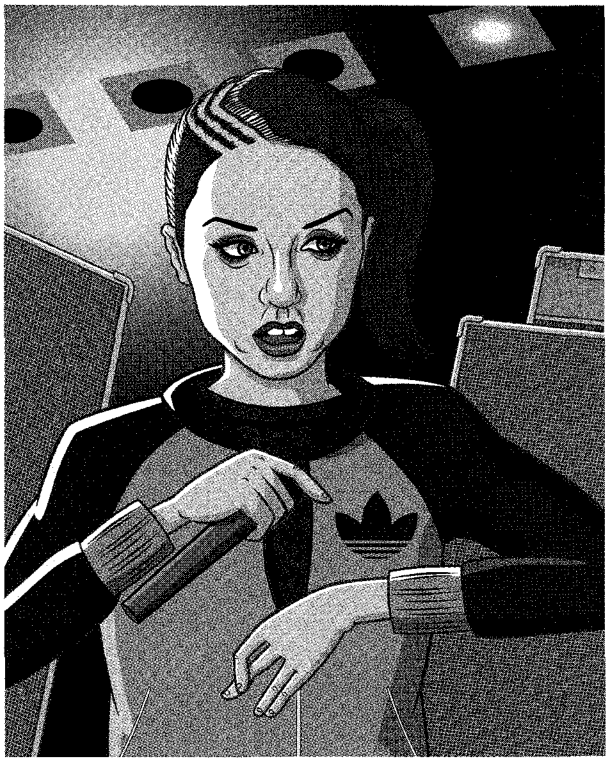
Also Playing

ALMOST HEAVEN: THE SONGS OF JOHN DENVER: Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BACH AT LEIPZIG:** New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FOOLS IN LOVE:** Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **HILDA:** 59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. **IN MY LIFE:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **IN THE CONTINUUM:** Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444. **JERSEY BOYS:** 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE ODD COUPLE:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **ON SECOND AVENUE:** J.C.C., 334 Amsterdam Ave. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **RFK:** 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THIRD:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 30: The Led-Zeppelin-lite guitarist and singer **Billy Squier.** Dec. 1: **Yngwie Malmsteen** is a genius to some and a punch line to others. He was perhaps the swiftest-fingered soloist of the eighties, and his technical chops remain impressive. Just don't expect anything new. Dec. 3: **The Max Weinberg 7,** the house band for "Late Night with Conan O'Brien," provides a shot of rockin' boogie and jump blues.



The British m.c. Lady Sovereign, at the Knitting Factory.

MICHAEL WELDON

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—Dec. 2-4: The "American Idol" crooner **Clay Aiken** swings by with his highly theatrical holiday show, "Joyful Noise."

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Dec. 1: **Prefuse 73** (one of the many aliases used by the experimental hip-hop producer Guillermo Scott Herren) crafts wide-ranging electronic music. Dec. 2: The shimmering indie pop of the Bay Area outfit **Rogue Wave.** With **Shelby,** a local group with the power and grace of its namesake iconic sixties muscle-car designer.

BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Nov. 30-Dec. 1: **Patti Smith** celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of her début album, "Horses," by playing songs from the influential disk, from the unforgettable opening lines ("Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine") straight through to the end. She'll be backed by the original band members Lenny Kaye, on guitar, and Jay Dee Daugherty, on drums, along with the bassist Tony Shanahan and the guitarist Tom Verlaine, who played on the original album as a guest artist during his days with Television. Flea, of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, will also be on hand. Smith has yet to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, but she was recently named a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French Minister of Culture and Communications, perhaps for the good work she did introducing legions of alienated souls to the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Dec. 2-3: Anchored by the singer and guitarist J Mascis, who has a lethargic drawl and a caterwauling approach to his instrument (think of a punky Neil Young), **Dinosaur Jr.** inspired countless alternative bands in the wake of its eighties heyday. There was an acrimonious breakup at the end of the decade, but the original lineup got back together earlier this year for a reunion tour that shows no sign of slowing down. Dec. 5: The brooding California ensemble **As I Lay Dying.** Dec. 6: **Funeral for a Friend** shares its name with a plangent Elton John tune, but this Welsh band is all loud guitars and frayed vocal chords. The band's third album, "Hours," is an amalgam of emo histrionics and metal-guitar heroics.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Dec. 1-3: The **Loser's Lounge,** an ad-hoc collection of fun-loving musicians led by the keyboardist and cultural archeologist Joe McGinty, turns to the coolly sophisticated music of Roxy Music and Brian Eno.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Nov. 30: The nineteen-year-old British m.c. **Lady Sovereign,** a key member of the U.K. grime scene, is a pint-sized white girl who deals in high-energy and highly danceable material. Sov, as she likes to be called, returns to the scene of a triumphant show earlier this year in which she overcame technical glitches and other problems. The d.j. **Ghislain Poirier,** who remixed one of Sovereign's songs for her just-released U.S. début album, "Vertically Challenged," will also perform. Dec. 2: **Beatallica** dissolves the lines between parody and tribute as it conflates the songs of its musical heroes, the Beatles and Metallica. Jaymz Lennfield Krk Hammettson, Kliff McBurtney, and Ringo Larz are their pseudonyms. Studious vocal mimicry, inventive musicianship, and crunching metal arrangements are their stock in trade. They are so adept, apparently, that they have stirred speculation that they are actually Metallica in disguise. Dec. 5: **Pretty Girls Make Graves** (see Warsaw).

"LET'S ZYDECO"
The roving concert series dedicated to the indigenous dance music of Louisiana presents a holiday show with the **Bruce Daigrepont Cajun Band,** from New Orleans. With **Li'l Anne & Hot Cayenne.** (Hungarian House, 213 E. 82nd St. For more information, call 212-685-7597 or visit www.letszydeco.com. Dec. 4.)

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—Dec. 5: The acerbic young singer-songwriter **Nellie McKay.**

NOKIA THEATRE TIMES SQUARE
Broadway at 44th St. (212-307-7171)—Dec. 1: The British trio **Morcheeba** set the standard for trip-hop in the mid-nineties with its downbeat grooves and the smoky cooing of its vocalist, Skye Edwards. But that was then. The band, which is the property of the two other members—brothers Paul and Ross Godfrey—is back with a lively new album, "The Antidote," that features the earthy vocals of a new singer, Daisy Martey. Now, however, they are touring with yet another vocalist, Jody Sternberg. Dec. 3: **Damian Marley,** the youngest of Bob Marley's seven sons.

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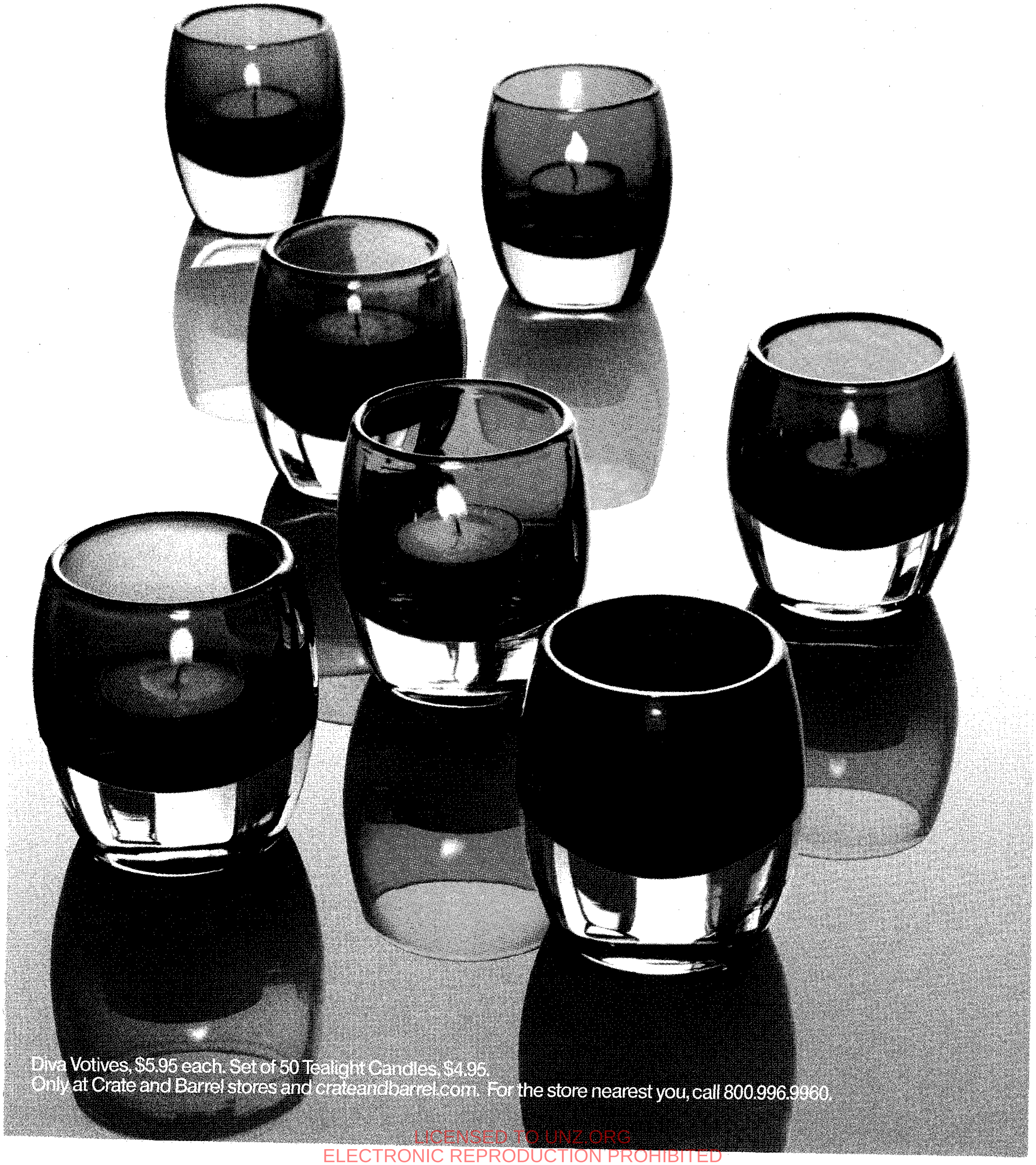

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NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—Dec. 3: **Bob Mould's** first band, the post-punk trio Hüsker Dü, had a sizable influence on groups like Nirvana and Green Day. After it broke up, in 1987, Mould had a solo career, briefly fronted another band, Sugar, and then spent much of the nineties writing scripts for professional wrestling. His more recent musical enterprises reveal a fixation with electronic music, although his latest album, "Body of Song," has the rock edge that got him started.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—Dec. 6: Seattle's **Pretty Girls Make Graves** have charmed critics with their second album, "The New Romance," by capturing the spirit of vintage punk rock without sounding derivative or retro.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Wadada Leo Smith is a free-thinking trumpeter. **Alan Kushan** is an avant-garde composer who plays a custom-built santir, a type of Persian zither. Together they have written "Tabligh," a piece that incorporates jazz, classical Persian music, and music from the *zikr*, a Sufi ceremony of remembrance. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. Dec. 1.) ♦ The vocal ensemble **Klapa Sinj**, which comes from the Dalmatian coast of Croatia, makes its New York City début, in the company of the Croatian singer-songwriter **Nenad Bach.** (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. Dec. 2.) ♦ The young Israeli singer **Yasmin Levy** performs Sephardic Jewish songs from fifteenth-century Andalusia, Morocco, and Turkey. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. Dec. 3.) ♦ "Songs of the Spirit" unites **Meshell Ndegéocello, Odetta, DJ Spooky,** the **Klezmatics, Sekou Sundiata,** the **Tibetan Monks of the Drepung Loseling Monastery,** and others. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Dec. 6. For more information about all the shows, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Nov. 30-Dec. 3: Two of jazz's most incisive mainstream pianists, **Bill Charlap** and **Bill Mays,** perform duets.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Nov. 29-Dec. 4: The Cuban émigré **Arturo Sandoval** is an athletic trumpeter who regularly transforms excess into a virtue.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Nov. 29-Dec. 4: There are few musicians in a better position to pay tribute to Ray Charles than the saxophonist **David (Fathead) Newman,** who was one of the chief soloists in the glory days of the late, lamented soul genius. His guests include the singer **Cynthia Scott.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—The high-spirited entertainer **Michael Feinstein** is a true mensch. He delivers his annual holiday program with ecumenical evenhandedness. Through Dec. 31.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Nov. 30-Dec. 4: The union of jazz and the music of the celebrated indie-rock band Pavement was hardly inevitable but it is certainly intriguing. On their new album, "Gold Sounds," the saxophonist **James Carter,** the pianist **Cyrus Chestnut,** the bassist **Reginald Veal,** and the drummer **Ali Jackson** take on the work of Stephen Malkmus and company. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Dec. 1-4: The pianist **Pablo Ziegler** keeps the spirit of his former boss, Astor Piazzolla, alive through his vibrant tango band.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Dec. 1: When **Lewis Nash,** the most elegant drummer of his generation, and **Steve Wilson,** an inventive alto saxophonist who first found acclaim in Chick Corea's Origin band, get together and engage in searching duets, the results are always unpredictable and satisfying.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Nov. 29-Dec. 4: The **Jim Hall** trio. Some guitarists are bent on cramming together as many notes as possible. Hall plays the instrument with a jeweller's touch: a gorgeous chord here, a lyrical phrase there. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ZANKEL HALL
Carnegie Hall, 57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—If the musical "Cabaret" gives you the chills, **Max Raabe and the Palasat Orchester** is right up your *strasse*, er, alley. The twelve-piece Berlin ensemble has been re-creating the sounds of Weimar days (and reimagining the work of such decadent but more contemporary performers as Queen, Prince, and Labelle) for nearly twenty years. It makes its New York début on Nov. 30, with a program of dance and film music from the twenties and thirties by Cole Porter, George Gershwin, Allie Wrubel, and Franz Lehar.

HOLIDAY EVENTS

"Radio City Christmas Spectacular": This season, the show features the Rockettes, live animals, and, finally, the Radio City house musicians, who recently resolved their labor dispute with the venue's management. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-247-4777. Through Jan. 2.)

"A Christmas Carol": Theatreworks' musical adaptation of the Dickens classic is at the Lucille Lortel Theatre. (121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. Dec. 10-31.)

Trees: On Nov. 30 at 7, Sheryl Crow, Rod Stewart, Brian Wilson, and the Rockettes will appear, along with other luminaries, at the seventy-third annual Rockefeller Center tree-lighting ceremony. (Fifth Ave. at 50th St.) ♦ The American Museum of Natural History's origami tree, adorned with paper owls, doves, dragonflies, butterflies, and bats, is currently on display in Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall. (Central Park W. at 79th St. 212-769-5100.) ♦ The Metropolitan Museum's Christmas tree is decorated with eighteenth-century angels and cherubs and has a Neapolitan baroque crèche at its base. There's a lighting ceremony on Fridays and Saturdays at 7. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-535-7710. Through Jan. 8.) ♦ The Big Apple Chorus performs on Fridays at 6 and 7 and Saturdays and Sundays at 3 and 4 in front of the South Street Seaport's fifty-foot tree. (Fulton St. at Water St. 212-732-7678. Through Dec. 24.)

"The Nutcracker": New York City Ballet performs Balanchine's classic version of E. T. A. Hoffmann's fairy tale (see Dance). (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through Dec. 30.) ♦ In Dances Patrelle's "Yorkville Nutcracker," the action is transposed to New York City in 1895. (Kaye Playhouse, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. Dec. 9 at 6, Dec. 10 at 2 and 7, and Dec. 11 at 1 and 6.) ♦ New York Theatre Ballet condenses the story to an hour (see Dance). (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. Dec. 3-18.)

"Messiah": The soprano Ellen Hargis, the tenor Marc Molomot, the baritone Thomas Meglioranza, and the renowned English countertenor James Bowman are among the soloists joining the choir at St. Thomas Church in their rendition of Handel's holiday classic. John Scott conducts. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 212-664-9360. Dec. 13 and Dec. 15 at 7:30.) ♦ The eminent British conductor Richard Hickox leads members of the New York Philharmonic at Riverside Church. The soloists include Christine Brandes, Sara Mingardo, Mark Tucker, and the trusty Met star John Relyea. With the Westminster Symphonic Choir. (Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 212-875-5656. Dec. 14-15 at 7:30 and Dec. 16-17 at 8.) ♦ Another excellent "Messiah" comes courtesy of Richard Westenburg's Musica Sacra ensemble; the City Opera star soprano Lisa Saffer and the countertenor Michael Chance are among the soloists. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 18 and Dec. 20 at 8.)

Hanukkah: For eight evenings starting on Dec. 25 at 5:30, a new lamp will be lit atop the thirty-two-foot-tall menorah at Fifth Ave. at 59th St. There will be hot latkes and live music on the first and last nights. (For more information, call 212-736-8400. Note that the lightings are at 3:30 on Friday the 30th and at 7:30 on Saturday the 31st.)

Music at the Met: To hear a Christmas concert amidst the intimate grandeur of the Medieval Sculpture Hall at the Metropolitan Museum of Art is a classic New York experience that should not be missed. Dec. 1 and Dec. 4 at 6:30 and 8:30: "A Chanticleer Christmas," an always popular holiday program offered by the matchless male chorus from San Francisco, features not only their exciting renditions of spirituals but also works by Byrd, Victoria, Howells, Pärt, and Cui (his "Magnificat," Op. 93). ♦ Dec. 12 at 6:30 and 8:30: A quiet evening of songs and carols performed by the baritone Jubilant Sykes and the guitarist Christopher Parkening. (212-570-3949. For a complete listing of concerts at the museum and at the Cloisters, see www.metmuseum.org.)

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—The devotional paintings in **"Fra Angelico"** are lit up with heavenly blues, blood reds, and pure golds. Rewarding long contemplation, they can feel like love letters, passed down through the centuries from the fifteenth-century Tuscan artist. Through Jan. 29. ♦ In van Gogh's abrupt career—he was a full-time artist for just ten years—everything seems to have happened at once. The works in **"Vincent van Gogh: The Drawings"** indicate a talent evolving so rapidly that one sometimes seems to be witnessing a shift in style or philosophy inside a single work. Every type of mark is on the page—Morse-code-like dots and dashes, narrow scratchy lines and wide brushstrokes. Van Gogh's early ambition was to become a genre painter or an illustrator, and that feeling lingers as he moves into more complicated landscapes and compositions, with figures sometimes fighting a stiff sentimentality. But they get better fast, and soon look like individuals rather than ideas, or, rather, like *both.* He was living on the cusp of modernity, so he draws steam engines and horse-drawn drays, Parisian café patrons and weavers. Despite all of this, nothing feels frantic; there is rather an eerie calm, from his lonesome, grayed "Landscape in Drenthe" (1883) and 1888's boulder-centric "Rock and Ruins" to the interiors he drew at the Saint-Rémy asylum months before his death. Through Dec. 31. ♦ The British Museum was founded in 1753, and its collection of drawings numbers some fifty thousand. It's no wonder that Americans have never before seen most of the masterworks presented in **"Clouet to Seurat: French Drawings from the British Museum."** Jean Clouet (ca. 1475-ca. 1541) starts things off with the lovely, wimpled head of an amused-looking maiden, and things proceed apace through the roster of fa-

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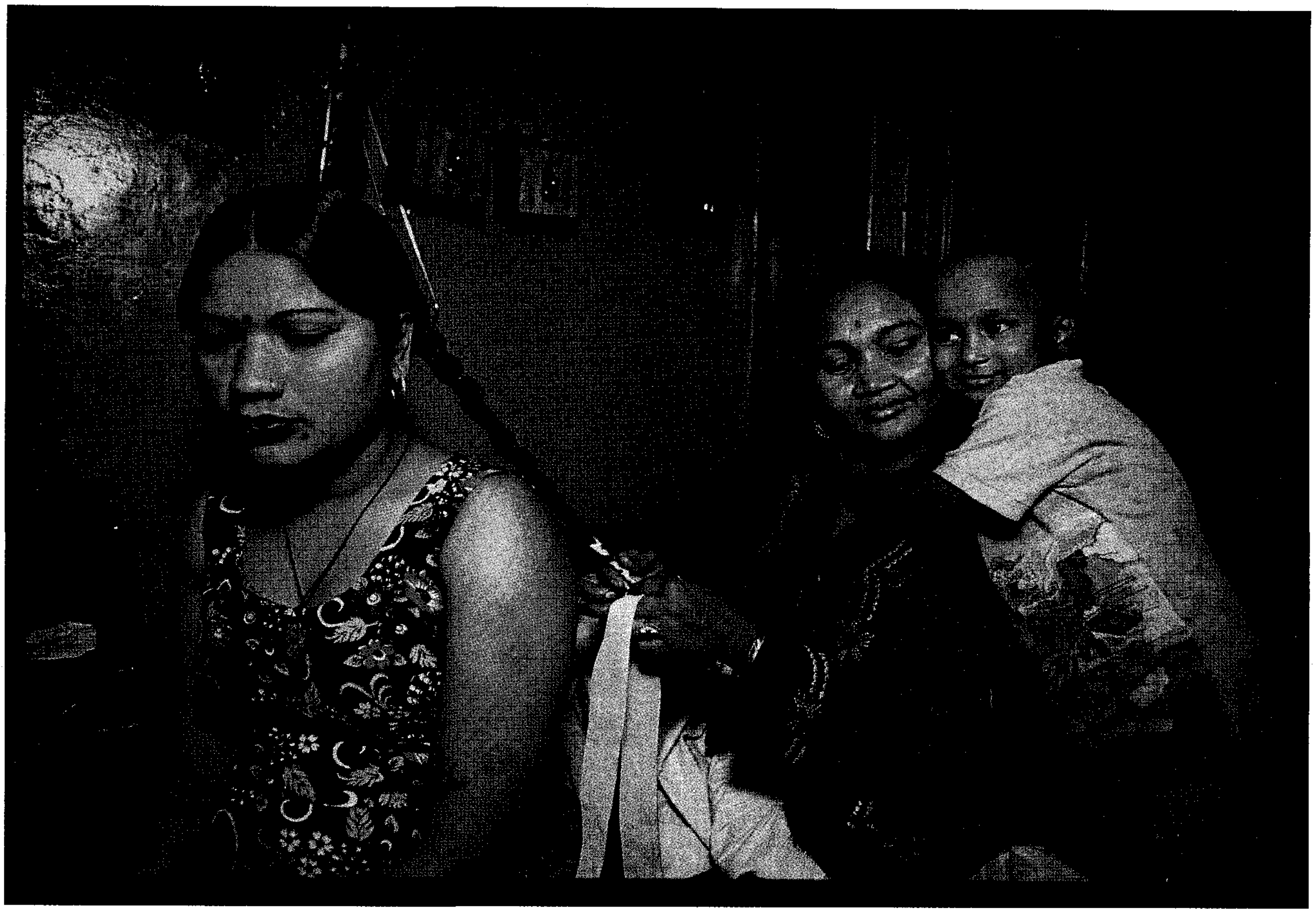

Mary Ellen Mark's photographs of brothels in India—which include this one, "Saroja Braids Kumla's Hair. Mari Hugs Saroja. Bombay, India, 1978"—are on view in two concurrent shows at Boesky and Richardson.

mous French names, until Degas wins the nineteenth-century laurels with two arresting images, one a pair of ballerinas picked out in thinned oil paint on electric green paper, the other a portly lady goggling back at us through field glasses. Through Jan. 29. ♦ **"Prague: The Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437."** Through Jan. 3. ♦ The pre-Photoshop images in **"The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult"** were purported to depict ghosts, spirit writing, ectoplasm, and the like. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"David Milne Watercolors: 'Painting Toward the Light.'"** A subset of a larger show organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario, these forty-five watercolor depictions of New York State scenes provide a rare chance to see the work of the Canadian artist (1882-1953) outside his home country. Through Jan. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—A sickly, lonely boy who grew up roaming his parents' country estate, Odilon Redon (1840-1916) later found his métier in symbolist and decadent dream life. **"Beyond the Visible: The Art of Odilon Redon"** emphasizes the artist's debts to other blackhearted fantasists like Poe and Baudelaire, Flaubert and Goya, in charcoal drawings and lithographs tending toward the nightmarish—spiders have grinning monkey faces, eyeballs sail disembodied through dark skies, and mutant innocents are beset by monstrous shapes. Then, at the turn of the century, Redon explodes into jewel-toned oils and pastels, and the floating creatures turn aquatic, floral, angelic. Through Jan. 23. ♦ The retrospective exhibition **"Elizabeth Murray"** includes many of the shaped and splintered canvases covered with energizing color combinations for which the artist is best known. In the second-floor galleries, a selection of Murray's prints adapt similar techniques to paper. Through Jan. 9. ♦ The fever pitch of post-9/11 anxiety is simultaneously stoked and suppressed in **"SAFE: Design Takes on Risk,"** an exhibition of objects designed to ward off, stanch, or manage disaster. Through Jan. 2. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The sprawling exhibition **"Russia!"** includes most everything you might think could fit under that rubric: gilt religious icons dating from the Middle Ages, Renaissance-era Western European paintings from imperial collections, romanticized portraits of peasant life, socialist-realist propaganda, early modernist masterworks from the collections of industrialists, videos made just this year. Through Jan. 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"The Art of Richard Tuttle."** The post-minimalist artist whose work helped blur the lines separating painting from sculpture from drawing, Tuttle is edging toward grand-old-man status, with a retrospective spanning from the sixties to the present. He is, of course, an odd candidate for grandeur of any kind. His wonky constructions of poor materials—cardboard, plywood, rope, the occasional twig or soda can—strenuously resist beauty, opting instead for a fey fragility that, when it works, embodies serendipity with assemblages that pit flatness against relief, poise against entropy, bright, flat color against dull or scuffed texture. When it doesn't work, the willful innocence tempts response of the "My kid could do that" variety. Through Feb. 5. ♦ Ed Ruscha's installation of paintings **"Course of Empire"**—which shares a name and theme with Thomas Cole's 1836 cycle of paintings, in the New-York Historical Society's permanent collection—was a hit at the Venice Biennale and will be on view at the Whitney through Jan. 29. ♦ **"Raymond Pettibon."** Thirty-seven drawings and an animated film. Through Feb. 19. ♦ The retrospective **"Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color"** reveals a painter (1867-1938) who melded Old World influences with an architect's training and eye—updated later by the lessons of the Fauves, Die Brücke, and artists like Franz Marc—to produce images of buildings and landscapes broken into bright structural shards, like segments of stained glass. Through Feb. 12. ♦ **"Still Life: A Vital Theme."** Through Jan. 15. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Darwin"** traces the discoveries and influence of the great naturalist (1809-82) with, among other things, a recreation of his study, samples of fossils he collected, and live specimens of the tortoises, frogs, and iguanas that he encountered in his travels to the Galápagos Islands. Through May 29. ♦ **"Dinosaurs: Ancient Fossils, New Discoveries,"** a review of recent developments in the study of dinosaurs, provides insight into how the animals moved through their world. Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter"** is back for an eighth year. Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—An international quintet of self-taught artists have work on view in **"Obsessive Drawing."** Through March 19. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 10:30 to 5:30, and Fridays, 10:30 to 7:30.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—Some one hundred paintings by the Netherlandish artist Hans Memling (ca. 1435-94) survive; of the thirty portraits, twenty are at the Frick for the exhibition **"Memling's Portraits."** Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Egon Schiele,"** an exhibition of more than a hundred and fifty paintings and drawings by the Austrian artist, who died in 1918, at the age of twenty-eight. Through Feb. 20. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays and Thursdays, 11 to 6.)

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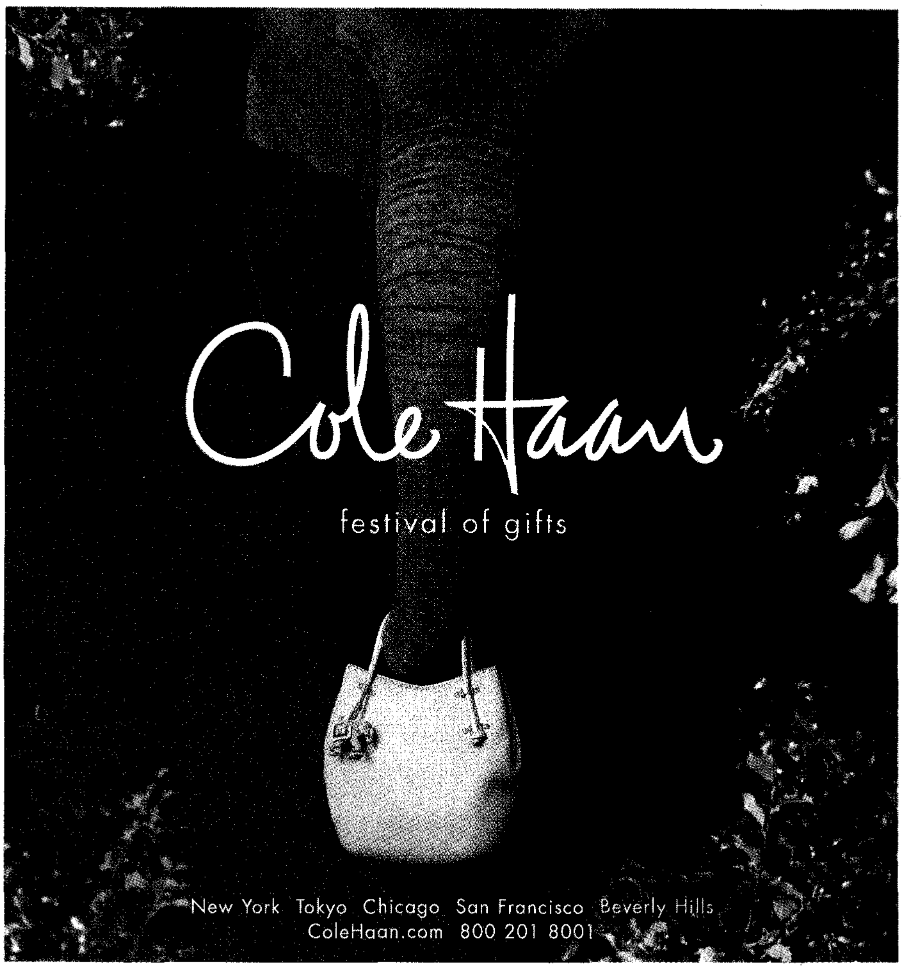

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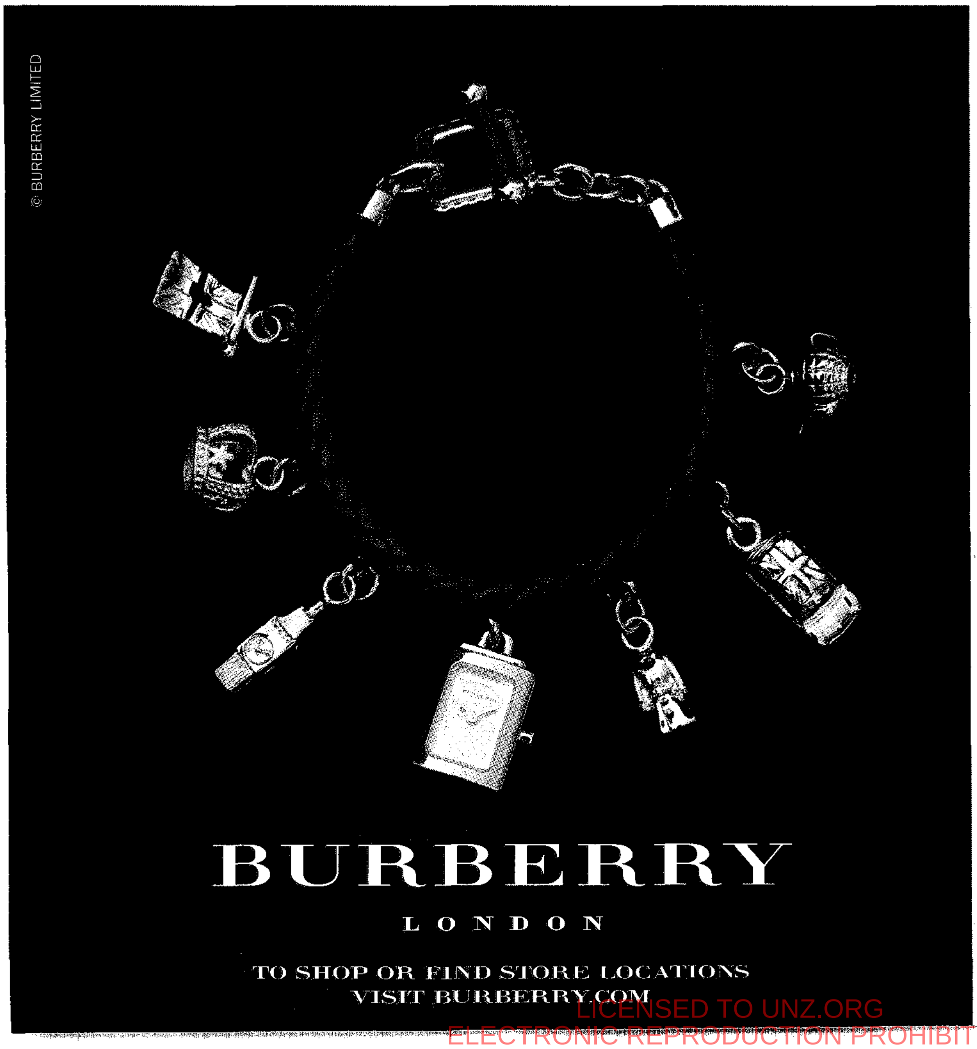


P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Ari Marcopoulos."** Marcopoulos has made a name for himself as a photographer of youth culture—an insider on the snowboarding and skateboarding scenes, with an instinctive understanding of the boyish recklessness that often fuels the sports. For this salon-style installation of unframed and sometimes enormous color pictures, the action is set in a much more intimate arena. Although there are several extraordinary landscapes here, the subject is primarily Marcopoulos's family: his wife, two rambunctious boys, and himself. Reminiscent of early Nan Goldin and Sally Mann, the images touch on the lovely mysteries of domestic life with both the expected edgy élan and an unexpected grace. Through Jan. 23. ♦ **"Stephen Shore: American Surfaces."** Through Jan. 23. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—In 2001, the "Freestyle" exhibition coined the art descriptor "post-black," a term that affirms the idea of a show organized via participants' race while demonstrating how young African-American artists are confidently moving beyond commonalities and making use of every style, trope, and medium they can get their hands on. **"Frequency"** revisits this paradigm, with a new selection of up-and-coming practitioners active in the U.S. Most were born in the seventies, and their aesthetics are wildly varied. Look for work by Sedrick E. Huckaby, Xaviera Simmons, Paula Wilson, and the inspired video by Hank Willis Thomas and Kambui Olujimi, which uses modified G.I. Joes to tell a tale of bling and blood. Through March 12. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

LYNN DAVIS
For a show titled "Water," Davis gathers big, handsome, black-and-white landscape photographs made between 1990 and 2005. Images of icebergs, sculpted into monumental curtain walls or floating flourishes, are juxtaposed with other natural extravagances: geysers, waterfalls, and the stilled black surge of a Hawaiian lava flow. But pictures of sea and sky along the Northumberland Strait—their minimalist restraint offset by the rich drama of the elements—give the show a meditative feeling. Davis is in no hurry to dazzle or seduce but, given time, she does just that. Through Dec. 3. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070.)

CHRIS WARE
The abject king of the American graphic novel, Ware is the father of such sad-sack heroes as Jimmy Corrigan ("the Smartest Kid on Earth") and Rusty Brown (Charlie Brown's more realistically miserable successor), who are tormented by unkind life circumstances on anxious, angular page layouts with sombre palettes. A series of preparatory drawings for the forthcoming edition (No. 16) of Ware's Acme Novelty Library focusses on the sphere-headed Rusty. Bluelines are overdrawn with black ink and at times collaged with pasted-in corrections. It's fun to see Ware thinking through his hand, and the absence of inked color emphasizes the panels' linear complexity. Through Dec. 3. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338.)

Short List

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI: PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through Dec. 17. **JOHN GRAHAM:** Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 212-987-4997. Through Dec. 22. **PHILIP GUSTON:** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-688-5951. Through Dec. 17. **YVES KLEIN:** L & M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020. Through Dec. 10. **BARRY LE VA:** Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-752-2929. Through

Dec. 17. **CHARLES MARVILLE:** Howard Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through Dec. 3. **CLAES OLDENBURG:** Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677. Through Dec. 23. **COLLIER SCHORR:** Roth, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067. Through Dec. 17. **CY TWOMBLY:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313. Through Dec. 24.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ORI GERSHT
This Israeli photographer, now based in London, makes blurred, indistinct landscapes that look like they might have been taken from a swiftly moving vehicle. Although Gersht's subject here is the Ukrainian countryside around Galicia, where some Jews found refuge and others were slaughtered during the Second World War, his work gives only the faintest hints of the sites' fraught history. These farmhouses, woodlands, and snow-covered fields appear to be receding into or welling up out of memory, but for the moment they're suspended in a foggy middle ground not unlike the one Gerhard Richter and Luc Tuymans evoke. Through Dec. 22. (CRG, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-229-2766.)

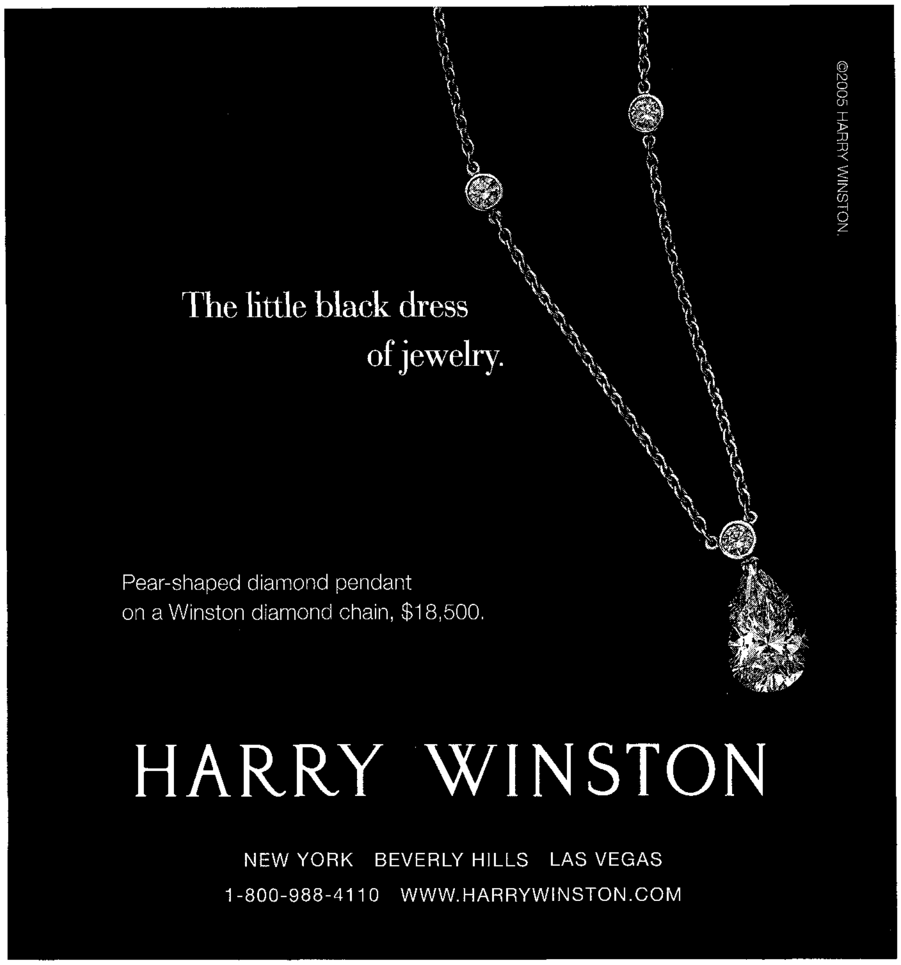
MAIRA KALMAN
Kalman, a frequent contributor of illustrations to this magazine, has turned her attention to stitchery. In a show titled "I Can't Stand All the Excitement" (also the motto she sewed around two figures who are either grappling or hugging), she presents colorful, absurd, and charming scenes and phrases—i.e., "The situation was not so good for Goethe and Greeba, alas"—worked on old tea towels, burlap, and thin dresses. Through Dec. 10. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)

TIM NOBLE AND SUE WEBSTER
Serious modernist sculpture gets a swift kick in the pants from Noble and Webster's abstract forms, which follow in the welded-steel tradition of David Smith and Anthony Caro but diverge on other points. Light projected behind the welded-scrap-metal sculptures casts silly silhouette images on the wall: blobby self-portraits and bodies sporting both male and female attributes. Theirs is a wickedly ironic, irreverent form of virtuosity, more summer-camp prank—or camp in general—than homage. The machismo of mid-century sculpture is deflated by nose-thumbing but, in the end, Noble and Webster offer only a partial solution for its replacement. Through Dec. 23. (Bortolami Dayan, 510 W. 25th St. 212-727-2050.)

REBECCA WARREN
Warren's cheeky take on Beaux-Arts sculpture elevates and exaggerates the clay sketch to delightfully absurd proportions. Globby fired-clay figures wobble in "Pas de Deux"; others sport bombastic monikers like "Grand Cru" and "Europa." Together, the small, humpy mountains nod to amorphous efforts like Rodin's initially ridiculed portrait of Balzac. "Invention of the Daguerreotype," a heap of clay painted black, makes a particular plea for ceramics, the perennial bastard child of sculpture, in the age of mechanical reproduction. It also serves as a posthumous defense of artists who liked their forms lumpy rather than slick and finished and Salon-elegant. Through Dec. 23. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.)

Short List

BAS JAN ADER: Rubenstein, 534 W. 24th St. 212-462-4905. Through Dec. 22. **MARK BRADFORD:** Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262. Through Dec. 3. **JOHN CHAMBERLAIN:** PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-989-4258. Through Dec. 3. **TRACEY EMIN:** Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923. Through Dec. 17. **APRIL GORNIK:** Danese, 535 W. 24th St. 212-223-2227. Through Dec. 23. **HANS HAACKE:** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through Dec. 23. **MONA HATOUM:** Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474. Through Dec. 22. **REBECCA HORN:** Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181. Through Dec. 3. **MARY KELLY:** Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 212-727-3323. Through Dec. 3. **MARY ELLEN MARK:** Boesky, 535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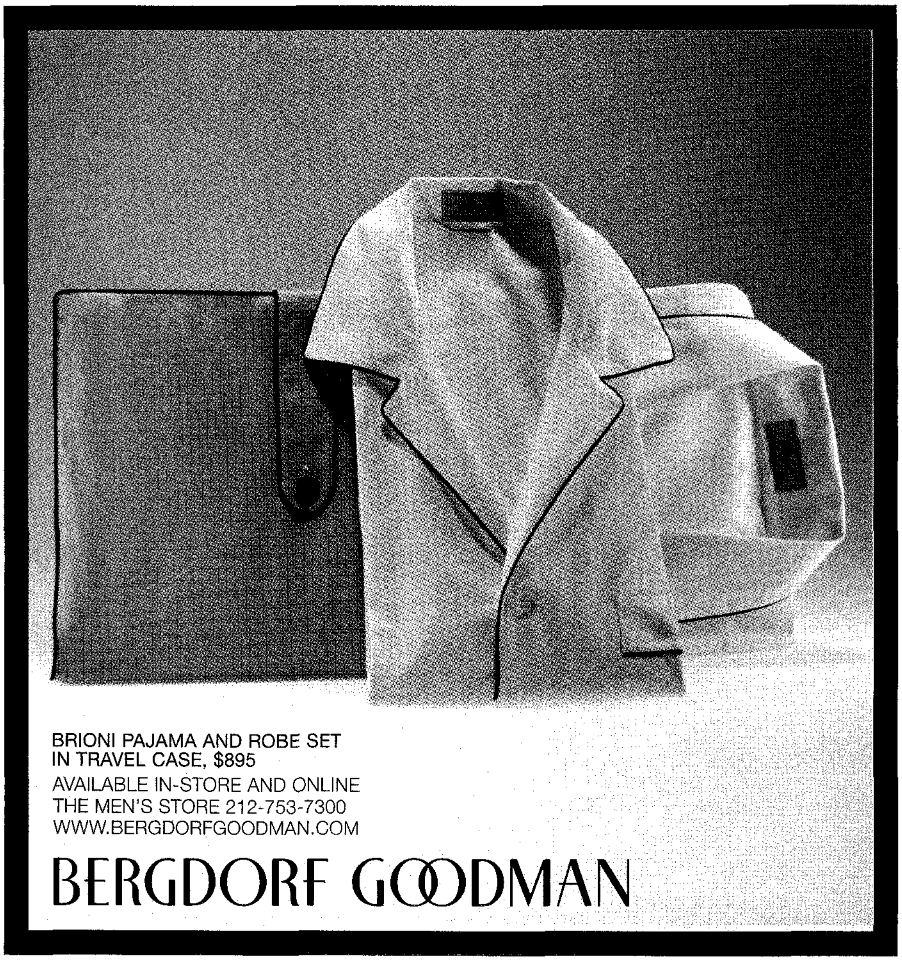
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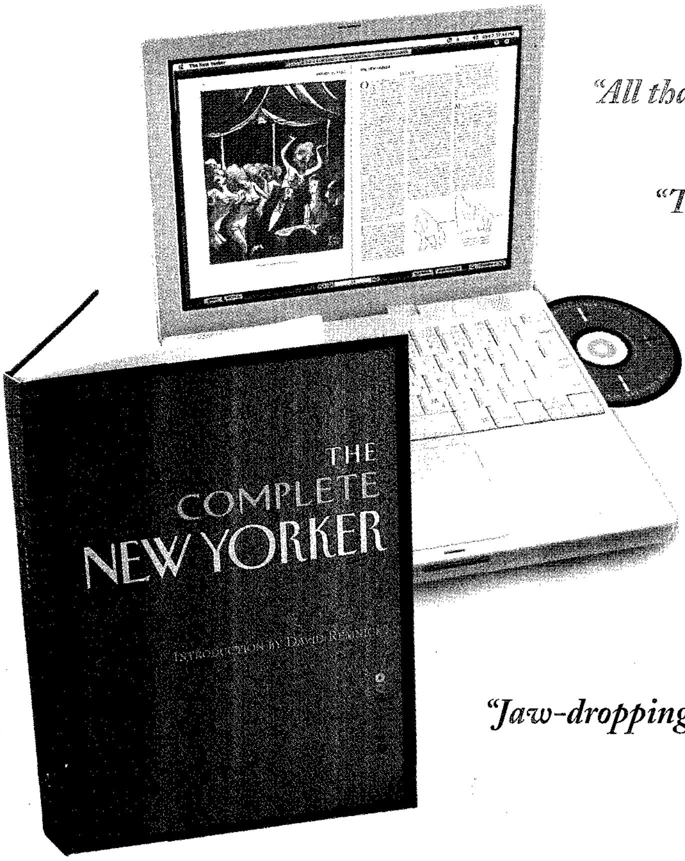

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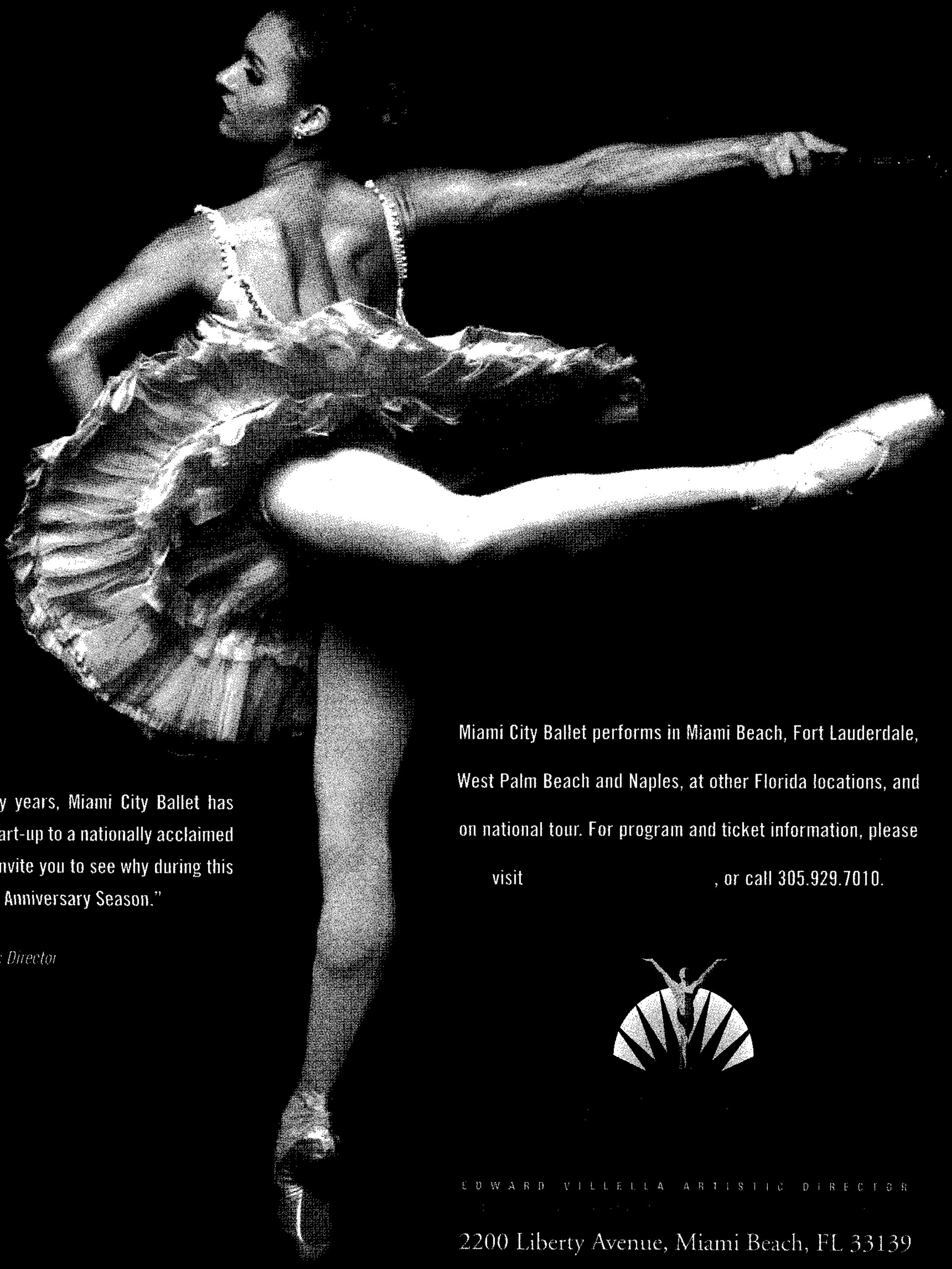

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Miami City Ballet Principal Dancer Mary Carmen Catoya Photograph © Joe Gato

W. 22nd St. 212-680-9889, and Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610. Through Dec. 23. **KEN SCHLES:** Schoormans, 508 W. 26th St. 212-243-3159. Through Dec. 17. **NANCY SPERO:** Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470. Through Dec. 3. **BILL VIOLA:** James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500. Through Dec. 22. **"TWIXT TWO WORLDS, OR THE UNINVITED GUEST: A MAGICIAN AT THE SÉANCE":** Burgin, 243 W. 18th St. 212-462-2668. Through Dec. 10.

DANCE

"THE NUTCRACKER"
Balanchine's version of this classic Christmas story, for all its marzipan shepherdesses and adorable Polichinelles, captures the poignancy of the moment at which a young girl is about to leave her childhood behind. Marie and Uncle Drosselmeier's nephew are danced by students from the School of American Ballet, as are many of the smaller roles, and New York City Ballet veterans and rising stars alternate in the other main roles. Casts are announced on the company's Web site one week in advance. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Nov. 30-Dec. 1 at 6, Dec. 2 at 8, Dec. 3 at 2 and 8, Dec. 4 at 1 and 5, and Dec. 6 at 6. Through Dec. 30.)

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE
The company starts off its annual five-week season at City Center with the première of "Reminiscin'," a typical production by the company's artistic director, Judith Jamison. The setting is an Edward Hopper-style diner, but the nighthawks who gather don't just sit with their coffee. To a medley of songs by Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, and others, the men peacock, the women work their charms, and everyone pairs off in duets of love both troubled and triumphant. Hans Van Manen's "Solo," which is actually a high-speed male trio, also receives its company première. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Nov. 30 at 7, Dec. 1-2 at 8, Dec. 3 at 2 and 8, Dec. 4 at 3 and 7:30, and Dec. 6 at 7. Through Jan. 1.)

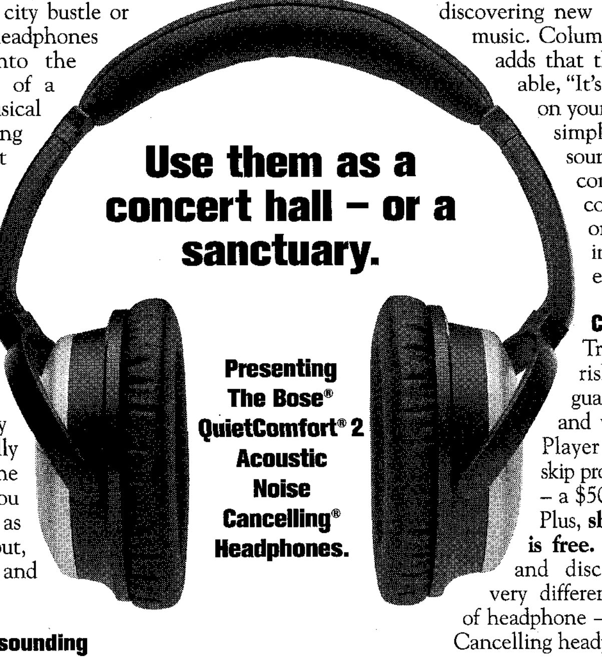
ARMITAGE GONE! DANCE
Karole Armitage's work has always come in trendy packaging. In the eighties, it was East Village chic; now it's Benetton-ad multicultural. But deeper down, the dances show a true classicist, twisting and extending ballet à la Balanchine. For her new piece, "In This Dream That Dogs Me," the set, once again by David Salle, incorporates red velvet curtains and calligraphically arranged piping. Calligraphy also marks the choreography, the movement now sinuous, now angular. Krumping, the frenetic Los Angeles street form, makes a brief appearance, but the heart of the work is a series of pas de deux in which a woman is clearly in control—no matter how languorous she seems, how hauled, bent, or stretched. With live music by Annie Gosfield. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 30-Dec. 1 at 8, Dec. 3 at 2 and 8, Dec. 4 at 2 and 7, and Dec. 6 at 8. Through Dec. 18.)

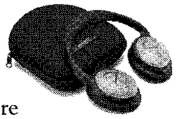
MIGUEL GUTIERREZ AND THE POWERFUL PEOPLE
In his new solo "Retrospective Exhibitionist," Miguel Gutierrez is a punk narcissist—aggressively bored in his sweatpants and Boris Badenov T-shirt, surrounded by A.V. equipment. While he plays a tape of himself giving a lecture, he repeats his own lines into a microphone. Gutierrez knows that performers can be vain, egotistical, and, well, masturbatory. But he also sees something sublime in the way a dancer exults in going beyond the limits of his body—especially later, in the all-female trio "Difficult Bodies," a tour de force of punishing unison dancing. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 30-Dec. 1 at 7:30, Dec. 2 at 7:30 and 10, and Dec. 3 at 7:30.)

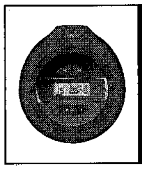
BALLET HISPANICO
Tina Ramirez's versatile company, now in its thirty-fifth year, can do ballet or salsa with equal panache. In Alexandre Magno's new "Orfeu in the Carnaval of Souls," set in a Rio ghetto, the ballet steps slither into sections of smooth Brazilian social dance. María Rovira's "Tierra de Nadie," from 1996, features a corps of women who keep time with their rolling, seductive hips, then suddenly snap their flexible backs so their heads nearly touch the floor. Ramón Oller's "Bury Me Standing" mixes flat-footed Gypsy kicks with precise, airy split leaps. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Nov. 30-Dec. 2 at 8, Dec. 3 at 2 and 8, Dec. 4 at 2 and 7:30, and Dec. 6 at 8. Through Dec. 11.)

"IT'S ONLY A REHEARSAL"
In this work, the first in the "NØ5" festival of Norwegian performance groups, the company Zero Visibility Corp. reimagines the story of Actaeon and Artemis—in which Actaeon spied the goddess as she bathed in her grotto, only to be transformed into a stag and devoured by his own dogs—as a couple with relationship issues, in a streetwise pas de deux that includes break-dance-like moves, acrobatics, sexual imagery, and humorous narration. The seven middle-aged performers in Baktruppen's tongue-in-cheek "Un-Do-Three" poke fun at the conventions of modern dance. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101. Nov. 30-Dec. 1 and Dec. 3-4 at 8. Through Dec. 11.)

"BALLETTO STILETTO"
You'd expect that a downtown holiday show choreographed by the feisty Heidi Latsky might have slinky girls in stilettos, some disco beats, a theremin-inflected score, and a Santa cape lined with gold lamé. But this party-girl adaptation of the Brothers Grimm tale "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" also has martial-arts battles starring a fellow called Eugene the Poojean. Latsky herself plays an old peddler woman with dreads; her quicksilver moves are like a series of small explosions. (La Mama E.T.C., 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Dec. 1-3 at 7:30 and Dec. 4 at 2:30 and 7:30. Through Dec. 18.)







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MOVEMENT RESEARCH IMPROVISATION FESTIVAL
At Danspace's annual festival, the vibe is decidedly nonhierarchical: big-name dancers create alongside journeymen, open-call picks, and even the audience. Four different programs this week find latter-day Judson Church followers still actively questioning first principles. "Walk-in to Danspace" is an open jam "free of judgment and leadership," while "Flow" tests the hypothesis that artists improvising in three-minute blocks will feel less pressure to fully develop work. Participants (including musicians) are urged to break free of established conventions like rehearsal, melody, and rhythm. For complete details, see www.movementresearch.org. (St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Dec. 1-4 at 8:30.)

GOLDEN DRAGON ACROBATS
The troupe from Henan, China, continues its run. (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Dec. 2 at 7, Dec. 3 at 1 and 7, and Dec. 4 at noon and 5. Through Jan. 1.)

"PRONE"
The choreographer John Jasperse is not afraid to show flesh, but he never glamorizes it; his works are carnal but not sensual. In his latest piece, the audience participates by lying down among and beneath the three dancers and sitting in chairs around them. The proximity of these hardworking bodies, their image multiplied by mirrors overhead, can be unsettling or, conversely, reaffirming of one's own fleshliness. The score, by the experimental harpist and composer Zeena Parkins, will be performed live. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Dec. 2-3 and Dec. 6 at 8. Through Dec. 17.)

NEW YORK THEATRE BALLET
While Diana Byer's twenty-six-year-old chamber company is known mainly for revivals of small-scale classical works, it also specializes in carefully produced hour-long ballets for children. The "Once Upon a Ballet" series begins, naturally, with a reduced version of "The Nutcracker." Clara will be danced by the young Elizabeth Portnoy, and several roles, including the mice and the marzipan sheep, will be performed by children from the company's school. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. The gala is on Dec. 3 at 2. Dec. 3 at 11 and Dec. 4 at 11 A.M., 1, and 3:30. Through Dec. 18.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Nov. 30 at 7:30: **"La Bohème,"** with Elena Evseeva and Frank Lopardo as Mimì and Rodolfo, and Emily Pulley and Vassily Gerello as Musetta and Marcello; Philippe Auguin conducts. ♦ Dec. 6 at 8: The opera returns with a new leading cast that features Hei-Kyung Hong, Alexandra Deshorties, Roberto Aronica, and Vladimir Chernov. ♦ Dec. 1 at 8: Guy Joosten's production of Gounod's **"Roméo et Juliette"** yearns for a transcendent tone: Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers, clad in predictable period costumes, play their scenes on a turntable set inscribed with astrological symbols while Escher-like images and photographs of deep space are projected behind them. As Roméo, Ramón Vargas gorgeously shows off his elegant phrasing and solid high notes; the excellent young baritone Stéphane Degout, making his Met début, lends his dark jewel of a voice to the role of Mercutio. Natalie Dessay sings the role of Juliette. The orchestra, conducted by Bertrand de Billy, offers a committed performance full of style, thrust, and speed. ♦ Dec. 2 at 8 and Dec. 5 at 7:30: The world-première performances of Tobias Picker's **"An American Tragedy,"** an opera based on the Theodore Dreiser novel, feature a world-class cast that includes Patricia Racette, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, William Burden, and Nathan Gunn (along with Jennifer Larmore, in a cameo role). Francesca Zambello directs; James Conlon conducts. ♦ Dec. 3 at 1:30: **"Carmen,"** with Ana Maria Martinez, Nancy Fabiola Herrera, Marcello Giordani, and Erwin Schrott; Philippe Jordan. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

ABSOLUTE ENSEMBLE
The young conductor Kristjan Järvi brings an informal but highly energized new-music aesthetic to his concerts, even those that stretch beyond the contemporary. His next highlights works by the noted Swiss jazz-classical composer Daniel Schnyder: the American premières of both Schnyder's new opera, **"Casanova,"** and of his completion of Mozart's singspiel **"Zaide."** The fine cast includes such singers as Nicole Heaston, Esther Heideman, Richard Clement,

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TABLES FOR TWO
MELBA'S

300 W. 114th St. (212-864-7777)—Strictly speaking, a platter of chicken and waffles constitutes neither breakfast nor supper, but something in between: brupper, perhaps. Scholars have failed to turn up the combination's origins, but Joseph Wells, the proprietor of the now defunct Wells' Restaurant, in Harlem, claimed, somewhat audaciously, that credit belongs to the jazz musicians and clubgoers who would come to his place so late that they couldn't decide whether it was morning or night. Melba Wilson endorses this version; to her, chicken and waffles is a Harlem thing. Wilson is soul-food royalty—a niece of Sylvia Woods, the proprietor of Sylvia's. After a failed attempt a few years ago to revive the famed jazz club Minton's, Wilson finally has a place to which to affix her own name, in the booming area east of Morningside Park.

Wilson prefers the term "comfort food" for her fare, both because it deviates from certain orthodoxies (her collard greens are flavored with smoked turkey, rather than pork) and because she likes to think that a sublime plate of braised short ribs or macaroni and cheese has nothing to do with the color of your skin. She calls her appetizers "comfortizers," an apt designation for the spinach-and-cheese empanadas and for the mini-cheeseburgers, two to a plate, taller than they are wide. The entrées are likewise built for comfort and not for speed. As for the chicken and waffles, the highlight, besides the mere act of asking for them, is peeling off the fried batter with your fingers and sopping it in syrup. The only drawback is that this can't be done at five in the morning: the kitchen at Melba's closes around eleven.

Melba's down-home touches are few, and are either subtle (diners can sit in church pews, from the New Mount Zion Baptist Church, on 140th Street) or spontaneous. On a recent evening, as a waiter brought in a becandled slice of sweet-potato pie for a sheepish-looking young man, the woman who was sitting with him broke into a fork-stopping gospel rendition of "Happy Birthday." When she was done singing, Wilson came over and said, amid sincere applause, "Natasha, you gotta give us something else." She did, and it was comfortizing. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays for dinner, and weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $9.95-$16.95.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

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ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Dutilleux's "L'Arbre des Songes" ("The Tree of Dreams," a rhapsodic violin concerto commissioned for Isaac Stern) is the centerpiece of the orchestra's latest concert; the soloist is Leonidas Kavakos, a smart and determined young violinist who is making his Philharmonic subscription début. Iván Fischer, the conductor, balances out the program with two crowd-pleasers, Bartók's "Romanian Folk Dances" and Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Dec. 1 at 7:30 and Dec. 3 at 8.) ♦ Note: Kavakos will join members of the orchestra in a chamber-music program at the 92nd Street Y that features Brahms's String Quintet No. 2 in G Major and Schoenberg's "Verklärte Nacht" on Dec. 4 at 3. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S
John Adams's Chamber Symphony, already taking its place among the classics, is featured along with music by Beethoven (the Violin Concerto) and Haydn (the Symphony No. 102). The guest is Joshua Bell, who has written his own cadenza for the Beethoven; Donald Runnicles conducts. (212-247-7800. Dec. 1 at 8.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
The conductorless ensemble, continuing its recent enthusiasm for choral music, teams up with the Bach Choir of New York (headed by the estimable Kent Tritle) to sing Bach's "Magnificat." Also on the program are works by Respighi (the delicate "Trittico Botticelliano") and Hindemith. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 3 at 8.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES:
"IN DULCI JUBILO"
Louise Basbas, the impresario of this invaluable series, gets a chance to conduct this time, leading the Choir of Corpus Christi Church in a program for Advent and Christmas that includes works by Lassus, Schütz, Sweelinck, and Bach; the noted organist James David Christie is a special guest. (529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Dec. 4 at 8.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
The New York première of the Percussion Concerto by Jennifer Higdon (featuring the formidable Scottish percussionist Colin Currie) is a prelude to Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony; Christoph Eschenbach conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 6 at 8.)

RECITALS

BARYSHNIKOV ARTS CENTER
The enterprising pianist Pedja Muzijevic has been put in charge of a new series of informal one-hour concerts (with refreshments) offered in the Center's fourth-floor studio, which features an unobstructed view of the Hudson. It begins with Schubert's "Death and the Maiden," performed by the superb Brentano String Quartet. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. Nov. 30 at 7; doors open at 6:30. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-218-7540.)

ROBERT LEVIN: "MOZART EXPLORED"
The scholar-pianist's anniversary series continues with "Indoor and Outdoor Music," a concert that highlights Mozart's music for winds (including the Serenade in C Minor, K. 388, and a suite from "The Marriage of Figaro"). The guest artists include the clarinettist Charles Neidich and the bassoonist Frank Morelli. (Zankel Hall. Dec. 1 at 7:30. 212-247-7800.)

RICHARD GOODE
An all-Beethoven program (including the "Pathétique" Sonata and the Sonata No. 32 in C Minor) begins a new sequence of Carnegie Hall concerts by the probing American pianist. (Dec. 2 at 8. 212-247-7800.)

BEAUX ARTS TRIO
The commanding piano trio ventures down to Washington Irving High School to appear on the affordably priced People's Symphony series; the program is all Beethoven (including the "Ghost" and "Archduke" Trios). (Irving Pl. at 16th St. 212-586-4680. Dec. 3 at 8.)

MILLER THEATRE: JOHN ADAMS PORTRAIT
Alarm Will Sound, Alan Pierson's front-rank contemporary-music band, offers a "Composer Portrait" of America's reigning musical maverick that includes the Chamber Symphony, the clarinet concerto "Gnarly Buttons," and selections from the controversial music-theatre piece "I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky." (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Dec. 3 at 8.)

PEPE ROMERO
The patriarch of the Spanish guitar clan offers a solo recital at the 92nd Street Y, New York's locus for guitar concerts; it includes works by Albéniz, Turina, Falla ("Homenaje: Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy"), and Granados. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Dec. 3 at 8.)

EMANUEL AX
The refined and engaging pianist comes to Carnegie Hall to offer a program of ballades, including the complete Ballades by Chopin (the inventor of the genre) and by Brahms along with New York premières of new efforts by Kaija Saariaho and Chen Yi. (212-247-7800. Dec. 4 at 2.)

GARRICK OHLSSON
A week full of superlative pianists gets even more interesting with a recital from this adventurous artist, who combines music by Beethoven and Brahms (the "Handel Variations") with an array of Czech masterworks (four of Smetana's "Czech Dances" and the Sonata for Piano by the important contemporary composer Oldrich Korte). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. Dec. 4 at 3.)

"Transamerica," starring Felicity Huffman as a transsexual, opens Dec. 2.

LARA TOMLIN

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY
OF LINCOLN CENTER
The New York première of Melinda Wagner's "Four Settings" for soprano and seven instruments (with the soprano Christine Brandes) is featured on the Society's next program, which also includes music by Duruflé and Mozart (the Clarinet Quintet, with David Shifrin). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. Dec. 4 at 5 and Dec. 6 at 7:30.)

"MAKING MUSIC: GEORGE PERLE"
Perle, a master of American music who is celebrating his ninetieth birthday this year, writes pieces that are as gracious and elegant as they are complex. He has always had prominent champions—including the pianists Leon Fleisher and Jonathan Biss, who headline a concert that includes performances of the "Song Without Words" and the String Quartet No. 5 (with the Daedalus Quartet). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 5 at 7:30.)

CONTINUUM
Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs's ensemble looks back at four decades of premières, reprising works by Babbitt ("A Solo Requiem," with the soprano Lucy Shelton), Pärt, and Mamlok along with a new work by Paul Chihara ("Trio Nostalgico"). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. Dec. 6 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-501-3330.)

GREENWICH HOUSE: "KEYS TO THE FUTURE"
A two-concert festival begins with the noted new-music pianist Lisa Moore, offering works by Ligeti, Rzewski, and Bresnick along with world premières by John Halle, Paul Lansky, and Bryan Senti. (46 Barrow St. 212-242-4770. Dec. 6 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

AEON FLUX
The title character, played by Charlize Theron, is an assassin in the only city left in the twenty-fifth century. With Frances McDormand and Marton Csokas. Directed by Karyn Kusama ("Girlfight"). Opening Dec. 2. (In wide release.)

BE HERE TO LOVE ME
A documentary about the late Texan songwriter and musician Townes Van Zandt. Directed by Margaret Brown. Opening Dec. 2. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE BOYS OF BARAKA
An experimental boarding school in Kenya for adolescent African-American boys is the subject of this documentary, which was directed by Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady. Opening Nov. 30. (Film Forum.)

FAR SIDE OF THE MOON
Two estranged brothers (both played by the writer and director Robert Lepage) attempt to reconcile following the death of their mother, in a drama set against the backdrop of the U.S.-Soviet space race. Opening Dec. 2. (Angelika Film Center.)

FIRST DESCENT
A documentary that chronicles the rise of snowboarding, featuring interviews with early pioneers of the sport. Directed by Kemp Curly and Kevin Harrison. Opening Dec. 2. (In wide release.)

I LOVE YOUR WORK
Giovanni Ribisi stars in this psychological drama about a movie star who becomes obsessed with a young film student. With Franka Potente. Directed by the actor Adam Goldberg. Opening Dec. 2. (Village East Cinemas.)

THE KID & I
A boy with cerebral palsy (Eric Gores) seeks to fulfill his dream of starring in a Hollywood action movie alongside a fading star (Tom Arnold, who wrote the script). Co-starring Joe Mantegna, Rich-

ard Edson, Linda Hamilton, and Henry Winkler. Directed by Penelope Spheeris ("Wayne's World"). Opening Dec. 2. (Empire 25.)

LITTLE MAN

Nicole Conn directed this documentary about herself and her partner, Gwen Baba, as their second child, a son by a surrogate mother, is born three months early. Opening Dec. 2. (Cinema Village.)

TRANSAMERICA

Days away from completing male-to-female gender-reassignment surgery, Bree (Felicity Huffman) discovers that she has a son, who needs to be picked up from jail. With Elizabeth Peña as Bree's therapist. Written and directed by Duncan Tucker. Opening Dec. 2. (IFC Center.)

NOW PLAYING

ADIEU PHILIPPINE

In his first feature, made in 1960, the director Jacques Rozier celebrates youth, beauty, and exuberance in the shadow of France's dirty war in Algeria. The title alludes to a playful contest between two teen-age girls, Juliette (Stefania Sabatini) and Liliane (Yveline Céry), for the heart of Michel (Jean-Claude Aimini), a young Parisian television technician two months away from his mandatory military service. Their lighthearted yet earnest flirtations in Paris lead to a shaggy-dog ramble through Corsica, but the knowledge of how it must end—with Michel's deployment to Algeria—tinges the carefree wanderings with a worldly sadness. Rozier revels in the new world of rock music and Club Med, and his wondrous images raise the delicate rituals of adolescent courtship to a poignant comic grandeur. The girls' two-minute jaunt through the streets of Paris in quest of a pay phone feels like a dance that should never end. In French.—*Richard Brody* (Florence Gould Hall; Dec. 6.)

BEE SEASON

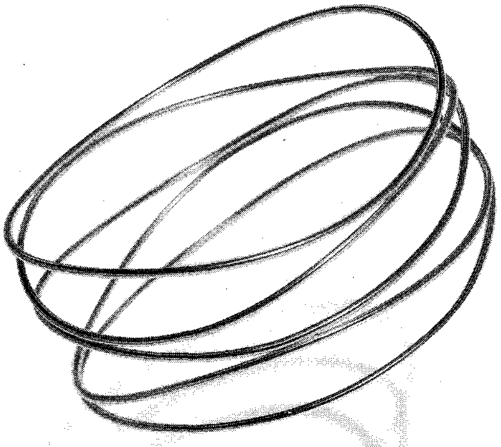
Young Eliza Naumann (Flora Cross) is a champion speller. This is a source of warm satisfaction to her father (Richard Gere), who not only thrums with ambition for his children but also, as a Kabbalistic scholar, asserts that words can grant access to the divine—a theory that is less likely to be embraced by anybody listening to the script of this movie. Eliza has a brother (Max Minghella) who is shopping around for religious experience, and a mother (Juliette Binoche) whose kleptomaniac leanings point to a calamity in her past. All in all, a happy California family, and if you expect to get a laugh, or even a fleeting smile, out of their wide range of dysfunctions, think again. Every tremor is treated with a frowning solemnity, and only the haunted performances of the two younger actors keep the movie alive. The spelling bees in which Eliza competes are drained of all drama by the floating, phantasmagoric style that is favored by the directors, Scott McGehee and David Siegel. Previously, they enjoyed some success with "The Deep End." This time, regrettably, they have moved to the other end of the pool.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/14/05.) (In wide release.)

BREAKFAST ON PLUTO

Patrick (Kitten) Braden (Cillian Murphy), an Irish foundling, grows up gay and glam in long hair and dresses. He leaves his small town, falls in love with an I.R.A. gunrunner, looks for his mother in London, where he becomes a prostitute, and gets accused of blowing up a disco. Neil Jordan's latest, from a screenplay by Pat McCabe (adapting his own novel), is a picaresque—the Progress of a Cross-Dresser. The movie has an exceptional sweetness: Murphy, with his ripe lips and big baby blues, makes Patrick a love. Jordan displays his poetic resourcefulness as a filmmaker, but Patrick, it turns out, just wants a lap to crawl into, and his quest isn't very interesting. With Stephen Rea as a magician and Liam Neeson as a priest who yields to temptation.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

DOWN TO THE BONE

A remarkably assured début feature by Debra Granik. Irene (Vera Farmiga) is working as a supermarket cashier, raising her two small children with her stolid husband, and battling a drug addiction. Farmiga in-



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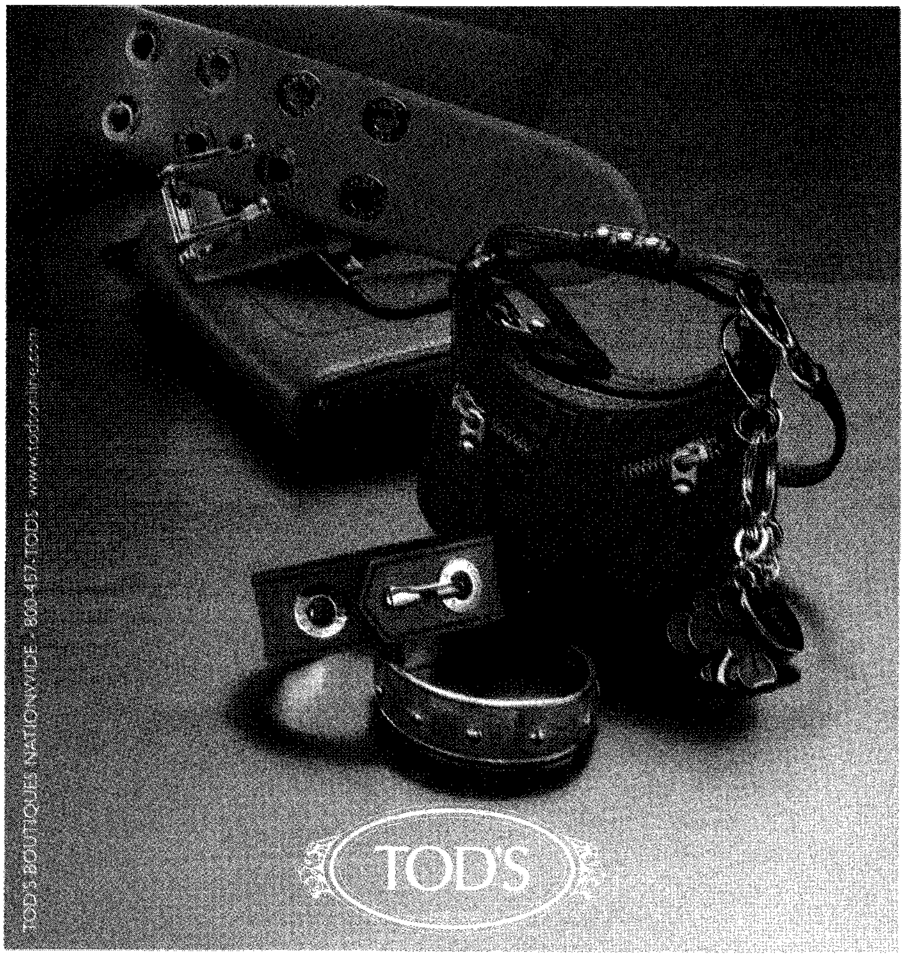
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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
A CUT ABOVE

Most of the kudos for the current revival of Stephen Sondheim's 1979 musical, "Sweeney Todd," have gone to Patti LuPone and Michael Cerveris. But Lauren Molina also deserves her share. Making her Broadway début as Johanna, Sweeney's long-lost daughter, Molina projects such sweet confusion, mental terror, and consistent interiority that she exposes the ways in which seasoned pros like LuPone and Cerveris play to the audience from time to time. Molina is a newcomer—she only recently graduated from college—but she taps into Johanna with an all-consuming honesty and range. Given her unconventional good looks and delicacy of frame, filmmakers in the sixties and seventies like Lumet, Coppola, and others would have snatched Molina up as quickly as they did the late, great Elizabeth Hartman, who conveyed an effect similar to Molina's in "The Group," "You're a Big Boy Now," and "The Beguiled" —that of a highly intelligent actress in love with being someone other than herself.

—*Hilton Als*

habits her character with a quiet, feral intensity, and Granik has a sharp eye for the soul-killing suburban landscapes. A male nurse whom Irene gets to know at rehab, Bob (Hugh Dillon), enters her life with a subtle, irresistible power, and the chemistry between the two actors is grippingly real. This small gem gleams with the hard light of truth.—*R.B.* (Quad Cinema.)

GIMME SHELTER

The facts of the Altamont debacle are well known: Hells Angels, hired as security by the Rolling Stones for a free concert at a Bay Area speedway, bullied and beat their way through the audience, eventually stabbing to death a young black man named Meredith Hunter. What is less well known, perhaps, is how skillfully the Maysles brothers' 1970 documentary builds to that horrible conclusion. In the film's opening scenes, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, and company light up Madison Square Garden with effulgent performances of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "Satisfaction." But the Maysleses undermine the triumphant mood by intercutting scenes of the Stones ensconced in a cramped editing room, reviewing rushes from Altamont (including a truly wrenching shot of Hunter's stabbing, parsed and slowed for maximum effect). The pain in Jagger's eyes as he watches the murder footage lasts only a moment before he papers over it with his strutting-cock persona, which in turn dissipates almost immediately. It is the collision of these two extremes—the Stones as erotic gods, the Stones as chastened schoolboys—that generates the film's enduring pathos.—*Ben Greenman* (Museum of Modern Art; Dec. 2.)

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

Puberty is never a pretty sight, but you have to say this for it: it doesn't let wizards off the hook. Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe) and his friend Ron (Rupert Grint), now in their early teens, are beset by the same vocal and emotional mayhem as their real-life equivalents. Hermione (Emma Watson) shows preternatural aplomb, but then she has been forty since the age of ten. Their pleasant existence at Hogwarts is disrupted by the arrival of two rival schools; each must furnish a contestant for the Triwizard Tournament, which is meant to demonstrate courage but actually resembles the lower strain of Japanese game show. The resulting tale is less tangled than its predecessors; the director, Mike Newell, has a surer sense of pace and a better handle on the bafflements of boarding-school life. He is stuck, however, with the grandiose requirements of the Potter franchise, which deems that every installment should rise to a final joust between good and evil, whether we like it or not. In short, the magic of Harry, on its fourth outing, is starting to wear thin. With Brendan Gleeson, who enjoys himself hugely as a rolling-eyed defender against the dark arts.—*A.L.* (11/28/05) (In wide release.)

JUST FRIENDS

In Roger Kumble's insipid comedy, Chris (Ryan Reynolds) is an L.A. music exec and former fat kid who finds himself stranded in his New Jersey home town, face to face with the object of his unrequited high-school love, Jamie (Amy Smart). The predictability of the story, an "American Pie"-like humiliation comedy but much less vulgar, is mitigated by a standout performance by Anna Faris, who is hilarious as the nasty, mercurial, oblivious pop star whom Chris is supposed to be chaperoning to Paris. Faris manages over-the-top pouting, bitching, screaming, and hissing as if they came straight from the heart.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

THE LIBERTINE

Johnny Depp, who has made his name with misfits, outsiders, and untrammelled wackos, now turns his attention to John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester—the scourge of seventeenth-century London, and by some distance the wickedest poet in the language. Depp plays him as a *poète maudit*: a self-loathing paleface, loitering in a dirt-brown twilight of his own devising. He's not entirely wrong, but one longs for Rochester the charmer—the gallant, devouring hooligan whose tongue and verse alike could charm the pants off anyone he pleased. The heart of the film is his conquest of Elizabeth Barry (Samantha Morton), the actress who, under his tutelage, became the mistress not just of the London stage but of many of the grandees who frequented it. There is expert assistance from Rosamund Pike, in the role of Rochester's long-suffering wife, but other performers have a bored and bewildered air—and who can blame them, when the director, Laurence Dunmore, seems determined to drown them in a universal murk? With John Malkovich, plus nose, as Charles II.—*A.L.* (11/28/05) (Angelika Film Center.)

RENT

In Chris Columbus's faithful but unimaginative film adaptation of Jonathan Larson's hugely popular Broadway musical about twenty-somethings living in self-imposed squalor in the East Village, most of the original cast and songs remain intact (Rosario Dawson and Tracie Thoms are the only newcomers). The spirit of the original, though, is deadened by the belabored re-creation of the nineteen-eighties, with oversized and meticulously grittified sets, extreme mood lighting, and distractingly fake visible breath. The movie offers fans and people who never got to see the musical a chance to hear the songs in a crisp, clean recording, but aside from a poignant story line about Angel (the graceful Wilson Jermaine Heredia), a young drag queen who loses his battle with AIDS, the simple "No Day But Today" theme is not quite enough to bring this film to life.—*S.L.* (In wide release.)

SARAH SILVERMAN: JESUS IS MAGIC

The comedian Sarah Silverman has the elongated neck and full nostrils of a depraved colt—she's shapely and lean, with a dazzling smile. Her blissfully dirty jokes are sparked by her Jewish-princess appearance; we don't expect girls who look like they're shopping at Saks to be this bawdy. She's not making fun of herself when she talks about sex—she's truly sexual. And, in the sincere tones of an arrogantly uninformed college freshman, she tells us what to think of race. The deadpan put-downs of Martin Luther King and black teen-age girls who get pregnant flirt with racism and parody—the jokes have a teasing danger. This movie is mainly a record of Silverman's standup act in a North Hollywood theatre. There's a rather feeble prelude and epilogue, but the act itself is a terrific introduction to the hippest comic working today. Directed by Liam Lynch.—*D.D.* (Empire 25 and Union Square.)

THE SYRIAN BRIDE

In Eran Riklis's warmhearted comedy about the bureaucratic madness engendered by Middle East conflicts, Mona (Clara Khoury), a Druze woman in the Golan Heights, is about to move to Damascus to marry Hammed (Makram Khoury), a Syrian television actor—which will make it impossible for her to see her family again. Though the film comes across as little more than a richly textured and sentimental European TV movie, the story is elevated by the fierce, noble performances of Hiam Abbass as Mona's older sister, Amal, who is the family's moral center but suffers through a loveless marriage; Eyad Sheety as their brother Hattem, a worldly apostate who brings his Russian wife and son to the village and the family that he left eight years earlier; and a large multinational troupe of actors who seem deeply committed to the simple fact of working together. In the end this is merely a why-can't-we-all-get-along dream, its sweetness embittered by the common knowledge that it remains a dream. Appropriately, in Arabic, Hebrew, English, Russian, and French.—*R.B.* (Cinema Village.)

SYRIANA

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

WALK THE LINE

Joaquin Phoenix, with deep-set blue eyes, a long chin, and a scarred lip, is Johnny Cash; Reese Witherspoon, bouncy and smart, with long black tresses, is his beloved June Carter, of the country-singing Carter clan. Phoenix slings his guitar around and guns it at the audience in Cash's shambling style; his singing wavers in pitch, but, all in all, it's not bad. This bio-pic, covering Cash's youth and early manhood, written by James Mangold and Gill Dennis and directed by Mangold, is very pleasant but too conventionally conceived. Phoenix looks at times as if he wanted to kill someone, but the filmmakers haven't written anything interesting for him to say, and most of the time Cash

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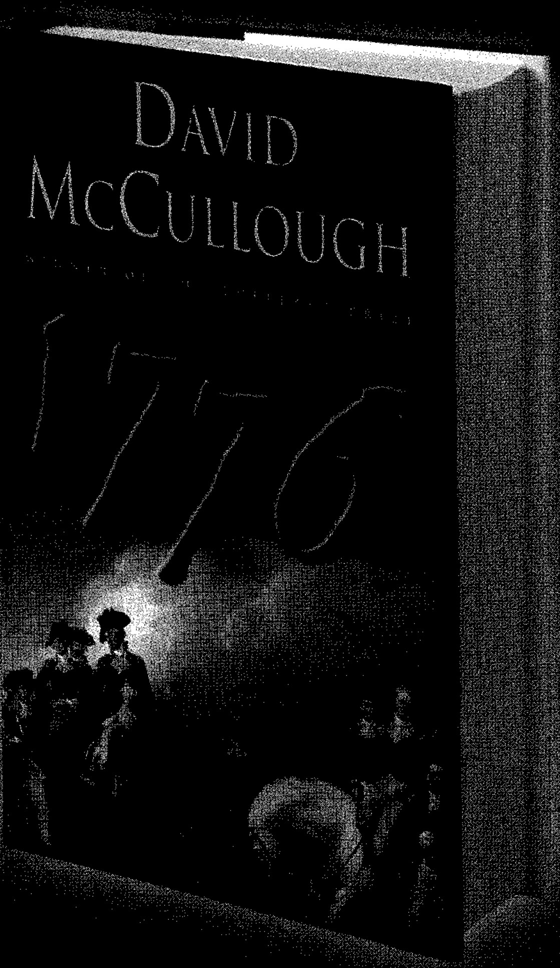

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comes off as furtive, weak, and lost. As June stares directly at Cash's weaknesses and nails him every time, "Walk the Line" becomes a kind of moralizing romantic comedy, in which he struggles to be a man worthy of her love and she struggles against her desire to have him. The picture offers some sidelong glances at life on the road in the convulsive 1955-56 period, in which country, R. & B., and nascent rock were all sloshing around together. With Robert Patrick as Cash's dead-eyed father and Vivian Loberto as his first wife, who nags at him and wants him to stay home with her and the kids.—*D.D.* (11/21/05) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

CAPOTE: In wide release. (10/10/05) **DERAILED:** In wide release. **39 POUNDS OF LOVE:** Sunshine Cinema. **THE SQUID AND THE WHALE:** In wide release. (10/24/05)

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—The Thirteenth Annual African Diaspora Film Festival (for complete program, visit www.nyadff.org). Some highlights: Nov. 30 at 8: "Emitai" (1971, Ousmane Sembene; in Diola and French). ♦ Dec. 1 at 2: "Otomo" (1999, Frieder Schlaich; in German). ♦ Dec. 1 at 7: "Smart Black People" (2005, Nelson George), followed by a discussion with the director. ♦ Dec. 2 at 7:15 and Dec. 5 at 6: "The Miracle of Candeal" (2005, Fernando Trueba; in Portuguese and Spanish). ♦ Dec. 3 at 3:15 and Dec. 6 at 4: "El Manara" (2004, Belkacem Hadjadj; in Arabic); the Dec. 6 screening is followed by a discussion with the director. ♦ Dec. 4 at 9:50: "Sons of Gandhi" (2005, Lino de Almeida; in Portuguese) and "Soul in the Eye" (1974, Zózimo Bulbul; silent). ♦ Dec. 6 at 2: "How to Conquer America in One Night" (2004, Dany Laferrière; in French). ♦ "A Tribute to Jerome Hill." Dec. 1 at 7: A program of films by Jerome Hill and Jonas Mekas (1938-1991). ♦ Dec. 2-5: "Slovakia Presents: Central European Cinema." (For complete schedule, visit etphotoweb.org/slovakianyc2005.)

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"The World According to Shorts." Nov. 30 at 7:30: Scandinavian short films. ♦ Nov. 30 at 9:30: Short films from Argentina, Belgium, and Germany. ♦ Through Dec. 18: "Hard Boiled and in the Mood: Tony Leung." Dec. 1 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Chinese Odyssey" (2001, Jeffrey Lau; in Cantonese). ♦ Dec. 2 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Flowers of Shanghai" (1998, Hou Hsiao-hsien; in Shanghainese). ♦ Dec. 3 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Chungking Express" (1994, Wong Kar-wai; in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English). ♦ Dec. 4 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Tokyo Raiders" (2000, Jingle Ma; in Cantonese). ♦ Through Dec. 20: "A Popular Cinema: Nelson Pereira dos Santos." All films are in Portuguese. Dec. 5 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Rio 40 Graus" (1955). ♦ Dec. 6 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Rio Zona Norte" (1957).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Nov. 30-Dec. 1 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Classe Tous Risques" (1960, Claude Sautet; in French). ♦ Dec. 2-6 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Paths of Glory" (1957, Stanley Kubrick).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Dec. 20: "La Jeunesse, Vite! Young French Cinema 1959-1968." Dec. 6 at 12:30, 6:30, and 9: "Adieu Philippine" (†). ♦ Dec. 6 at 3:30: "La Pyramide Humaine" (1961, Jean Rouch; in French without subtitles.)

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." Dec. 2-3: "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" (2001, John Cameron Mitchell). ♦ "Weekend Classics." Dec. 2-4 at noon: "Beware of a Holy Whore" (1971, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German, English, French, and Spanish).

JAPAN SOCIETY
333 East 47th St. (212-752-3015)—Through Dec. 11: "Hiroshi Sugimoto Film Series: The Moving Image of Modern Art." Dec. 2 at 7:30: "The Water Magician" (1933, Kenji Mizoguchi; silent, with live narration by Hiroshi Sugimoto). ♦ Dec. 4 at 2: "The World of Geisha" (1973, Tatsumi Kumashiro; in Japanese). ♦ Dec. 4 at 3:30: "Ten Dark Women" (1961, Kon Ichikawa; in Japanese).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Poetry and Rigor: The Films of Gianni Amelio." Nov. 30 at 6: "Lamerica" (1994; in Albanian and Italian). ♦ Nov. 30 at 8:15: "Stolen Children" (1992; in Italian). ♦ "Early Autumn: Masterworks of Japanese Cinema from the National Film Center, Tokyo." Nov. 30 at 6:30: Early films by Yasujiro Ozu, Torajiro Saito, and Mikio Naruse (all films are silent). ♦ Nov. 30 at 8:15: "The Izu Dancer" (1933, Heinosuke Gosho; in Japanese). ♦ "World AIDS Day." Screenings in memory of Robert Beers. Dec. 1 at 6: "Ordet" (1954, Carl Theodor Dreyer; in Danish). ♦ Dec. 1 at 8:30 and Dec. 2 at 5:30: "Notorious" (1946, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Through Dec. 31: "Maysles Films: Five Decades." ♦ Dec. 1 at 6:30: "Psychiatry in Russia" (1955) and "Grey Gardens" (1976). ♦ Dec. 1 at 8:45: "Salesman" (1968). ♦ Dec. 2 at 7: "What's Happening! The Beatles in the USA" (1964). ♦ Dec. 2 at 9: "Gimme Shelter" (†). ♦ Dec. 3 at 6:30: "Showman" (1963) and "Ozawa" (1985). ♦ Dec. 3 at 8:45: "Jessye Norman Sings 'Carmen'" (1989) and "Accent on the Offbeat" (1994). ♦ Dec. 4 at 1: "Christo's Valley Curtain" (1974) and "Running Fence" (1978). ♦ Dec. 4 at 3: "Umbrellas" (1995). ♦ Dec. 4 at 5: "Concert of Wills: Making the Getty Center" (1997). ♦ Dec. 5 at 6:30: "Vladimir Horowitz: The Last Romantic" (1985). ♦ Dec. 5 at 8:30: "Soldiers of Music: Rostropovich Returns to Russia" (1991). ♦ Through Dec. 22: "Bright Stars, Big City: Chinese Cinema's First Golden Era, 1922–1937." Except where noted, all films are silent with English intertitles or simultaneous translation. Dec. 2 at 7:45: "Wild Rose" (1932, Sun Yu) and excerpts from early Chinese films; introduced by delegates from the China Film Archive. ♦ Dec. 3 at 2: "Daybreak" (1933, Sun). ♦ Dec. 3 at 4:30: "Dream of the West Chamber" (1927, Hou Yao) and "Labourer's Love" (1922, Zhang Shichuan). ♦ Dec. 3 at 7: "New Woman" (1935, Cai Chusheng). ♦ Dec. 4 at 2: "Red Heroine" (1929, Yao Shiquan). ♦ Dec. 4 at 4:30: "Song of the Fishermen" (1934, Cai). ♦ Dec. 5 at 6: "Pink Dream" (1932, Cai). ♦ Dec. 5 at 8:15: "Blood of Love" (1932, Sun).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Laurel and Hardy." Nov. 30 at 10:30 A.M.: "Talkie Shorts," program one (1932-33). ♦ "Fist and Sword: Martial Arts Classics." Dec. 2 at 7:30: "So Close" (2002, Corey Yuen Kwai; in Cantonese and English). ♦ "Sloan Science and Film." Dec. 3 at 2: Sloan Foundation Dialogue with Ron Howard and Brian Grazer. ♦ Dec. 3 at 4: "A Beautiful Mind" (2001, Ron Howard). ♦ Dec. 4 at 1:30: "Apollo 13" (1995, Howard). ♦ Dec. 4 at 4: "From the Earth to the Moon," episode five (1998, Graham Yost) and episode twelve (1998, Jonathan Mostow). ♦ "Repertory Nights." Dec. 3-4 at 6:30: "Forbidden Games" (1952, René Clément; in French).

PIONEER CINEMA
155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300)—"Doors Art Foundation Presents Films from Croatia." Dec. 1 at 7: "Here" (2003, Zrinko Ogresta; in Croatian.) ♦ In revival. Dec. 2 at 10:45: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964, Stanley Kubrick).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Dec. 2-3: "Teen Witch" (1989, Dorian Walker).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Thalia Film Classics." Dec. 4 at 7 and Dec. 6 at 6: "Pulp Fiction" (1994, Quentin Tarantino).

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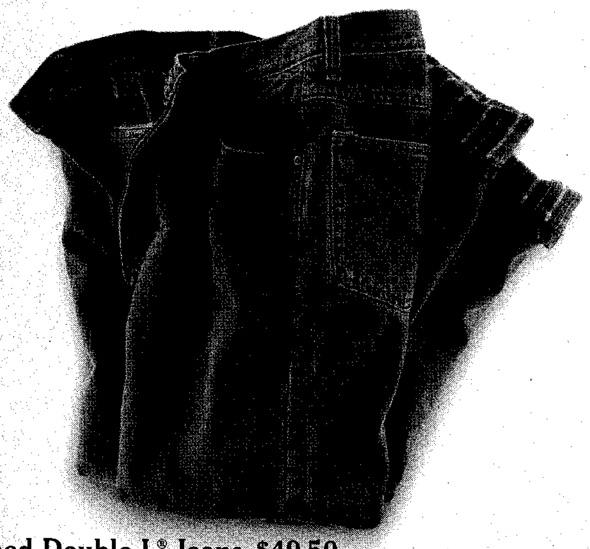

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WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Dec. 8: "Hard Questions: The Films of Amos Gitai." All films are in Hebrew, except where noted. Nov. 30 at 2 and Dec. 3 at 8:40: "Kadosh" (1999). ♦ Nov. 30 at 4:15, Dec. 3 at 4, and Dec. 6 at 3: "Yom Yom" (1998). ♦ Nov. 30 at 6:30 and Dec. 2 at 7: "Free Zone" (2005; in English, Hebrew, Arabic, and Spanish). The Nov. 30 screening will be introduced by the director. ♦ Nov. 30 at 8:45 and Dec. 4 at 1:15: "Kippur" (2000). ♦ Dec. 1 at 1 and 4:45, Dec. 2 at 3, and Dec. 3 at 2: "Esther" (1985). ♦ Dec. 1 at 3 and Dec. 2 at 1 and 9:15: "Field Diary" (1982). ♦ Dec. 2 at 5, Dec. 4 at 3:45, and Dec. 6 at 1: "Berlin Jerusalem" (1989; in Hebrew, German, English, and French). ♦ Dec. 3 at 6:15: "Alila" (2003). ♦ Dec. 4 at 5:40: "Kedma" (2002; in Hebrew, Arabic, German, Polish, Russian, and Yiddish). ♦ Benefit screening to commemorate World AIDS Day. Dec. 1 at 8: "A Closer Walk" (2005, Robert Bilheimer). ♦ "Larry McMurtry's American West." Dec. 4 at 8: "Brokeback Mountain" (2005, Ang Lee), followed by a discussion with McMurtry and the film's screenwriter, Diana Ossana.

READINGS AND TALKS

OPEN CITY READING
The literary magazine presents the novelist Christopher Sorrentino. With Shannon Welch and Ben Turner, who will offer selections from their fiction. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary. Nov. 30 at 7.)

ELIE WIESEL
The main character of Wiesel's latest novel, "The Time of the Uprooted," is an exiled Czech writer who spends his life first in Hungary, then in Vienna, Paris, and New York. On Dec. 1 at 8, the Nobel laureate discusses the meaning of exile from Biblical times through today. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

"SUNDAYS AT SUNNY'S"
This month, the reading series in the Red Hook, Brooklyn, bar features the novelist Bridgett M. Davis, the memoirist Lawrence LaRose, and the nonfiction writer Sherill Tippins. (253 Conover St., between Beard and Reed Sts. For more information, call 718-875-3677. Dec. 4 at 3.)

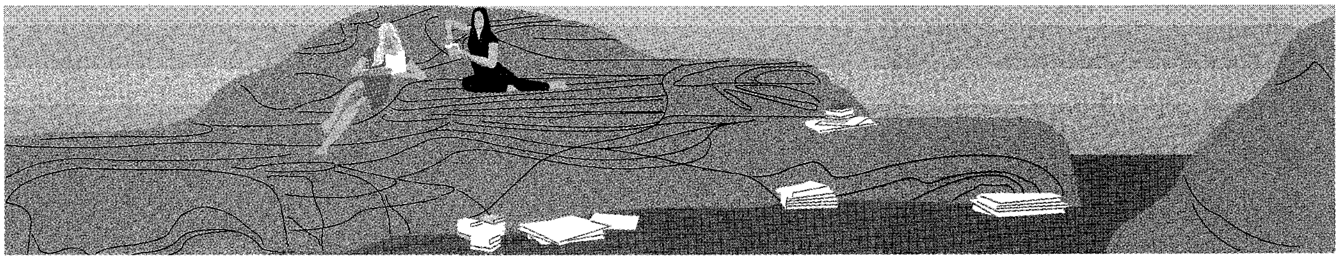
"DREAM BOOGIE"
The music critic and Elvis biographer Peter Guralnick reads from his new book, "Dream Boogie: The Triumph of Sam Cooke," and discusses it with the writer Jonathan Lethem. (Housing Works Bookstore Café, 126 Crosby St. 212-334-3324. Dec. 5 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

INDEPENDENT AND SMALL PRESS BOOK FAIR
Since 1988, small publishers have been gathering annually to display their wares and talk shop. This year, more than a hundred independent presses are participating, and the many public events range from a discussion of graphic novels to an inquiry on the state of blogging. (The Small Press Center, the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, 20 W. 44th St. Dec. 3-4. For more information, visit www.smallpress.org.)

"FIRST SATURDAY"
The Brooklyn Museum stays open late once a month and presents a wide variety of entertainment options in addition to its regular collection of art. This month the festivities start with a performance by Pistolera, a local rock-*en-español* band featuring the singer and guitarist Sandra Velasquez and her cousin Ani Cordero. It is followed by a tango dance party, with the violinist Leonardo Suarez-Paz and his band Cuarteto Tipico. The evening also includes a curator talk (by Marilyn Kushner on the photography of Edward Burtynsky, which is currently on display), a film screening (Lucho Bender's Argentine Christmas comedy, "Felicidades," from 2000), and tango lessons. (200 Eastern Parkway. 718-638-5000. Dec. 3, starting at 6.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Sotheby's sale of American paintings, drawings, and sculpture on Nov. 30 hits all the marks, from Gilbert Stuart (the "Munro-Lenox" portrait of George Washington) to Stuart Davis, lingering on works by Sargent ("The Rialto," expected to bring up to four million dollars) and by a selection of California painters as well; the Sporting Sale on Dec. 2 highlights not only an unexpectedly wide range of works by Alfred J. Munnings, that supremely elegant master of the turf, but also marine paintings, hunting pictures, and comfy canvases depicting purebred livestock, most of them gloriously overfed. A sale of Judaica on Nov. 30 (featuring such items as a radiantly illustrated mahzor for Rosh Hashanah, made in France circa 1300) reveals the glory of ancient traditions; an auction of watches, wristwatches, and clocks on Dec. 5 is a celebration of worldly luxury and technical accomplishment. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Christie's** counters with its own extensive sale of American paintings, drawings, and sculpture on Dec. 1, crowned by Cassatt's "Mother and Two Children" (estimated to sell for up to five million dollars); a full-length painting of Washington by Charles Willson Peale, to be offered on Jan. 21, will be on view. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)



RICHARD MCGUIRE

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
PIXARTISTRY
Dec. 14–Feb. 6

Along with an exhibition of paintings, sculptures, and electronics used in Pixar's computer-generated animation, the Museum of Modern Art presents a twentieth-anniversary retrospective of the studio's films. The program includes the familiar ("Finding Nemo" and "A Bug's Life") and the unfamiliar ("The Adventures of André and Wally B.," made in 1984, two years before the company's official founding). (212-708-9400.)

NIGHT LIFE
SUPPLANTED
Dec. 22

Terry Reid, the English singer and guitarist who is affectionately known as Super Lungs, is most famous for turning down Jimmy Page's offer to join the band that became Led Zeppelin. Reid makes a rare New York City appearance, at the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill. (212-997-4144.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
LEVINE TIME
Jan. 8 and Jan. 29

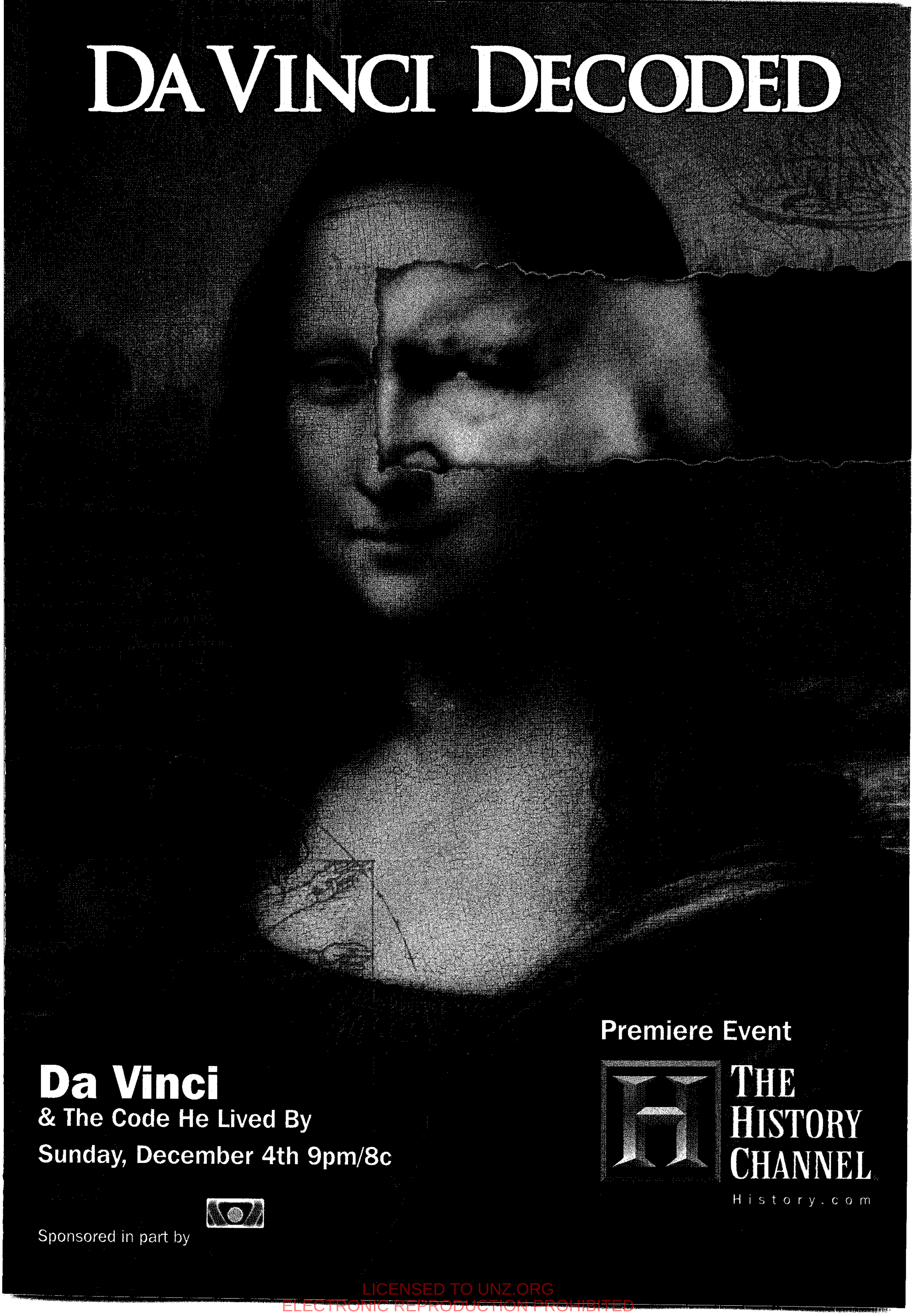
James Levine's technique lets him take on the Second Viennese School classics, but it's his knack for enlisting the world's great divas that draws the crowds. In the first of two concerts with the Met Orchestra, Renée Fleming sings Berg's rare "Altenberg Lieder," along with scenes from "Capriccio" and "Eugene Onegin"; in the second, the riveting Anja Silja performs Schoenberg's "Erwartung." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

THE THEATRE
PLAYING THE GAME
Jan. 19

"The Pajama Game," which premièred on Broadway in 1954 to rave reviews, will be revived by the Roundabout Theatre Company, with Harry Connick, Jr., Kelli O'Hara, and Michael McKean. Directed and choreographed by Kathleen Marshall. (212-719-1300.)

ART
D.I.Y. AESTHETIC
Jan. 26–April 29

Andrea Zittel examines ideas of luxury, necessity, and freedom through the manufacture of highly specialized vehicles, furnishings, and uniforms. The New Museum presents a retrospective of what she's done so far, including devices used in her forays into poultry breeding. (212-219-1222.)



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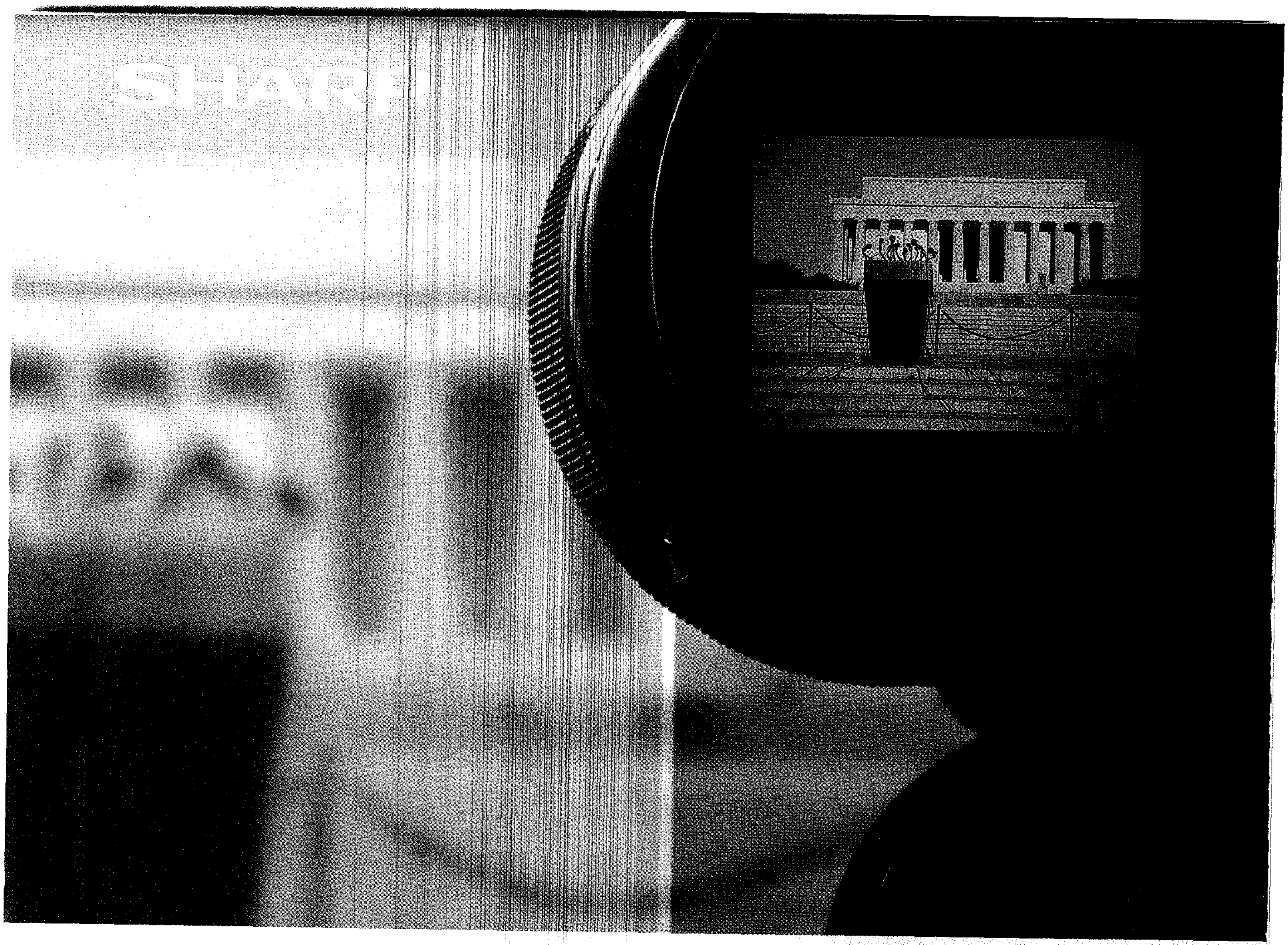

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BEHIND THE SCENES

FOCUS ON "THE WEST WING"

MICHAEL MAYERS, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

As the hit NBC show's director of photography, Mike Mayers is charged with expressing the nuance and rhythm of the White House via camera work and lighting. He recently spoke about the part he plays in the Emmy® Award-winning TV series' success and how the advent of HDTV has changed his view. The second installment of the three-part series will appear in next week's issue.

THE WEST WING

Combining elegance and function, and featuring resolutions up to 1920 x 1080 in models 45 inches and larger, AQUOS LC TVs allow you to experience the full excitement of high-definition television.

How important are visuals to telling a story on "The West Wing"?

Mayers: I think of the lighting and the movement of the camera as another character in the story. So I try to be as expressive with my tools as the writers and actors are with theirs.

The show's production values earn high praise. What do you attribute that to?

Mayers: Technically, we usually shoot on 35mm film, not video. We work under the same production standards as the best Hollywood features and use big lights and Arriflex cameras.

Describe a classic "West Wing" shot.

Mayers: A long Steadicam shot following "C.J." (Allison Janney, Chief of Staff) in one continuous take [interacting] with, say, a dozen actors and thirty extras that lasts over four minutes and stretches the length of a small city block on the Warner Bros. lot. That's called a "one-er." Everyone has to hit their marks and be at the top of their game.

Do viewers experience the show differently with HDTV?

Mayers: The great thing about HDTV and big screens is that viewers can get a lot closer to the way we see things. You can now have the same kind of clarity at home. The funeral of "Mrs. Landingham" (Kathryn Joosten) was shot in the National Cathedral in Washington, a beautiful location. The scene was vivid and the drama powerful and moving. It was satisfying to know that when folks at home saw this, it would be on a big, beautiful HD display in a home theater.

Is HDTV worth the investment?

Mayers: As a cinematographer, I am thrilled that people take the images seriously enough to invest in that kind of viewing experience. There's been a huge change in the way TV looks in the last ten years.

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
FLOOR WAR

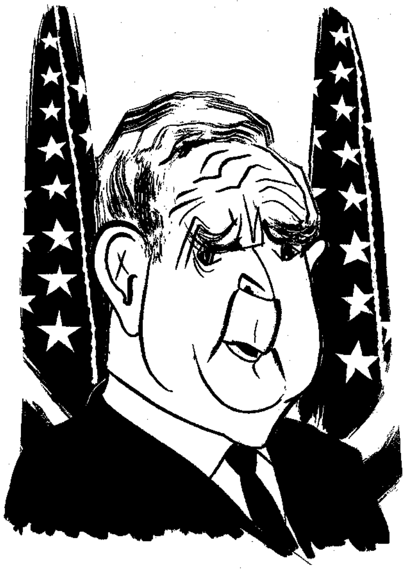
A hoary tradition of the Congress of the United States, inherited from the Mother of Parliaments across the sea, is the maiden speech. The most recent such speech was delivered by Jean Schmidt, who, on September 6th, became the Member of the House of Representatives from the Second District of Ohio. After being sworn in, she was permitted to address her new colleagues for one minute. In happy contrast to the rancor that has marked our political life of late, her words were soothing:

> Honorable people can certainly agree to disagree. However, here today I accept a second oath. I pledge to walk in the shoes of my colleagues and refrain from name-calling or the questioning of character. It is easy to quickly sink to the lowest form of political debate. Harsh words often lead to headlines, but walking this path is not a victimless crime. This great House pays the price.
>
> So, at this moment, I begin my tenure in this Chamber, uncertain of what history will say of my tenure here.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

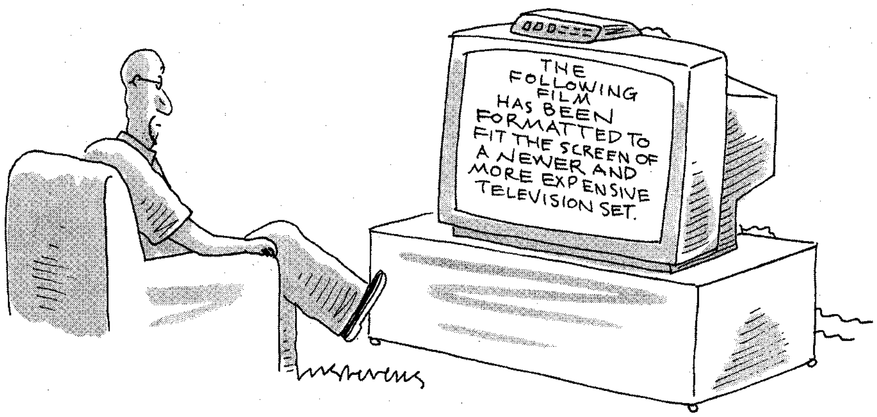
It didn't take long for Congresswoman Schmidt to provide history with the only thing it is likely to say of her tenure. On November 18th, the House took up a one-line resolution, "Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the deployment of United States forces in Iraq be terminated immediately." The resolution was a fake—a sham, a travesty—put up by the Republican leadership in order to blunt the force of a declaration made the day before by John P. Murtha, a seventy-three-year-old Democrat from the coal country around Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

Again, Schmidt was given the floor for one minute. She used it to say that she had just received a call from a Marine reserve colonel. "He asked me to send Congress a message: Stay the course," she said, and then added, her voice rising, "He also asked me to send Congressman Murtha a message: that cowards cut and run, Marines never do." She kept talking, but the Democrats in the chamber had already erupted in full-throated fury, the presiding officer was shouting "The House will be in order!" and pounding his gavel, and the damage—to Schmidt, not to Murtha—was done.



Murtha's statement had condemned the Bush Administration's conduct of the war as "a flawed policy wrapped in illusion," argued that the occupation was impeding progress in Iraq and putting the future of the American military at risk, and called for American troops to be redeployed as "a quick reaction force in the region." It was a cogent critique of the war, but its astounding impact was due mainly to who made it. Murtha spent thirty-seven years in the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Reserve. He was awarded the Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts, and, in 1974, became the first Vietnam vet to be elected to Congress. The authoritative "Almanac of American Politics" describes him as "hawkish and patriotic," an old-fashioned pol who devotes himself to "protecting the Pentagon and the troops."

Schmidt explained a few days later that neither she nor her Marine friend—a Christianist-right state legislator who had helped her win a photo-finish race against an Iraq-war veteran named Paul Hackett, in a district that normally goes Republican by fifty points—had had any idea who Jack Murtha was. Apparently his dissent on the war was sufficient reason to call him a coward. Jean Schmidt is the backwardest of backbenchers, and fellow-Republicans, including the friend she had quoted, hastened to distance themselves from her miscalculation. What gave it resonance was that she was reflecting—in a fun-house mirror—the thuggish behavior of her nominal betters.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Within hours of Murtha's declaration, the White House press office accused him of advocating "surrender to the terrorists." This was consistent with a broader White House campaign, which President Bush himself launched in a Veterans Day speech—delivered at an Army facility before a uniformed audience, hardly a suitable venue for a partisan attack—that pictured "Democrats and antiwar critics" as undermining the troops. The theme of this campaign is that, as Vice-President Cheney put it the other day, "any suggestion that prewar information was distorted, hyped, or fabricated by the leader of the nation is utterly false." He added, quoting John McCain (perhaps to the senator's discomfort), "It is a lie to say that the President lied to the American people."

No one has suggested that the leader of the nation "fabricated" prewar information; he may be a receiver of counterfeit goods, such as the phony documents about uranium from Niger which he cited in his 2003 State of the Union address, but he was not the forger. By now, however, the evidence is overwhelming that he, his Vice-President, and many members of his Administration did, precisely, distort and hype. And the distorting and hyping was not limited to prewar information. It has spilled over into postwar—or during-war—information, too. For example, on Veterans Day Bush asserted that "more than a hundred Democrats in the House and the Senate—who had access to the same intelligence—voted to support removing Saddam Hussein from power." As an analysis by James Kuhnhenn and Jonathan S. Landay, of the Knight Ridder Newspapers, put it, "This isn't true." Congress didn't vote to support removing Saddam from power, it voted to authorize the President to "defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq" and to "enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq." Too picky? Well, it's not so picky to point out that Congress had no access to the great bulk of intelligence information, including the President's Daily Brief, and that such information as the Administration did impart had been scrubbed of the doubts and refutations of intelligence professionals. Last week, Murray Waas reported on the *National Journal* Web site that ten days after September 11, 2001, "Bush was told in a highly classified briefing that the U.S. intelligence community had no evidence linking the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein to the attacks and that there was scant credible evidence that Iraq had any significant collaborative ties with Al Qaeda." This information, too, was not shared with Congress before the war, and was likewise kept from the commissions and senatorial committees that have since investigated the run-up to it.

Lies can be slippery. Lying can be subjective. It is not a lie, for example, to say that it is a lie to say that it is a lie to say that the President lied to the American people. It is a judgment, a judgment thrice removed, and probably an unsound one. Did the President and the Administration lie us into war? No member of Congress, so far as can be ascertained, has made that accusation in so many words. But the public is not so respectful of the niceties. A Pew poll a month ago found that while forty-one per cent of those surveyed thought that government officials claimed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction "mostly because they were themselves misinformed," slighty more—forty-three per cent—thought it was "mostly because they lied to provide a reason for invading Iraq." And in an NBC-*Wall Street Journal* poll fifty-seven per cent of those surveyed agreed that "President Bush deliberately misled people to make the case for war with Iraq." The war of occupation—dubious in origin, incompetent in execution, opaque but ominous in ultimate consequences—continues. Congressman Murtha is deeply worried. And many Americans are becoming deeply angry.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

BEIJING POSTCARD
POPPY, SHOPPING

Once upon a time, the Great Wall was an obligatory stop on any state visit to the People's Republic. Foreign leaders stood on the structure, shook hands with Communist Party cadres, and took photographs. But that was before the rise of the Hongqiao Market. Situated in southern Beijing, Hongqiao doesn't look like much. The white-tiled exterior is ugly; the interior is cramped in a way that suggests that fire codes have yet to be deciphered. Its hundreds of tiny stalls have been arranged according to the mercantile food chain: live fish in the basement; electronics and watches on the ground floor; luggage, shoes, and clothing on the second; pearls on three, four, and five.

Last week, on the day before President Bush arrived in Beijing, venders had settled into the routine of the state visit. The market buzzed with reports of Bush, Sr., who had already been there to shop, having arrived in China a few days before his son in order to participate in a Sino-American trade forum.

On the ground floor, at stall No. 76, where fake Jacob the Jeweler diamond watches cost about thirty dollars, a vender named Pan Li had saved a digital photograph of George H. W. Bush on her mobile phone. Like everybody in China, she referred to him as Lao Bu

Shi—Old Bush—to distinguish him from Little Bush.

"He's so tall!" the young woman said, proudly showing the photograph. "This is his bodyguard, the short man with the bald head. They went over there, to that Sony shop."

At stall No. 41, Jiang Meiyun, the proprietor, said that she had bargained, through a translator, with the former President. She held up a small device labelled Sony VOR Microcassette Corder M-800V. "I said it was four hundred yuan"—about fifty dollars—"and then the translator said twenty-five dollars," Jiang explained. "I said this is real; this is Sony—I can't sell it for that little. They said forty dollars, but I had already given them the real price. They didn't buy it."

Five stalls down, a merchant named Lin Qi had made a sale. He held up a box: Goldyip brand GL-802 Auto Reverse Mini Cassette Player. Old Bush had paid ten dollars, cash. "That's the right price," Lin said. "I didn't try to ask for more."

Upstairs, at stall No. 126, which sells familiar, brown-on-brown handbags labelled "Gochi," Cai Shumin said that Old Bush had walked past her stall on the way to the high-end pearl shops on the fourth floor. He had passed by a large ad for Sharon's Store, which features a photograph of a tiny Chinese woman standing next to an enormous Bill Clinton. In the picture, Clinton wears a bright-red "Stanford Dad" T-shirt, along with a tired expression common among people who don't realize that they are about to appear in advertisements.

There were more photographs upstairs at Fanghua Pearls & Jewelry. "Old Bush didn't buy anything, but he looked at the pearls," Yao Cheng said. She noted that other American leaders had visited, and she pointed to a picture labelled with a brass plaque: "Mrs. Vice President Cheney and Mrs. Ambassador of USA and Mrs. Xiaobai."

Another photograph featured Lyudmila Putin. "She's come here four times," Yao Cheng explained. "The last time, she stayed from eleven in the morning until six in the afternoon. She ate lunch here. They delivered it from the embassy."

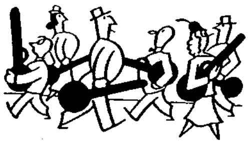
The store's walls were covered with photographs. Margaret Thatcher and Cherie Blair had visited. One section of wall was dedicated entirely to photographs of Tarja Halonen, the President of Finland. Mark Spitz had pearl-shopped. William S. Cohen, the former U.S. Defense Secretary, was a man who could deal with jewelry. Zubin Mehta (label: "Foremost Conductor") was a customer, along with "Mr. and Mrs. Governor of Oklahoma of US."

Next door, at Sharon's Store, a clerk confirmed that Old Bush had popped in. Two days earlier, Sharon herself had visited the American delegation with a selection of pearls, for a private viewing. When she was reached by telephone, she declined to discuss the transaction.

"Thanks for calling," she said. "But I can't tell you what our customers buy."

—Peter Hessler

VISITING DIGNITARIES
GIBBONS

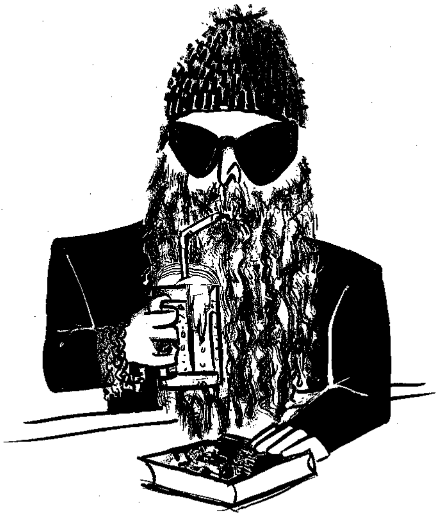


Billy F. Gibbons, the lead guitarist of the Texas trio ZZ Top, prefers to sleep on the floor when he stays in a hotel. Before he dozes off, he listens on his laptop to old radio programs, such as "The Saint" or "The Whistler." "These antiquated sounds can pull me out of my head," Gibbons explained the other afternoon, while catching his breath, as he put it, in a dark corner of the bar at the Rihga Royal hotel, in midtown.

Gibbons drinks beer through a straw, to keep the suds from getting in his beard, a double-barrelled two-footer that, along with a pair of Ray-Bans and an African cap that resembles a full head of stubby dreadlocks, leaves little room for evidence of a face. As a prop—one of rock's least dispensable—the beard also obscures the presence of a fairly keen mind, which instead must reveal itself in ornate remarks about souped-up automobiles, vintage guitars, and life on the road: his pillars of wisdom. For example, here is his answer to the question "Who was that?" after he'd talked for a while on his cell phone: "Elwood Francis, our guitar technician, took a brief absence from the tour in order to escort his wife to China, where they successfully adopted a baby girl named Joshi. In his absence, his post was attended by a talented technician named Sammy Sanchez, who introduced me to a guitar called the Turbo Diddly, which is made from an old wooden cigar box. It has what you call a resonator, and it sounds like a bad recording from 1949. The guy who makes it, Kurt Schoen, is a pilot for UPS."

Gibbons collects and customizes cars and guitars. He and his mates in ZZ Top, Dusty Hill (who has a beard, too) and Frank Beard (who does not), share an obsession with gear, as they call it, which Gibbons has chronicled in a new picture book called "Rock + Roll Gearhead." He was in town, after two gigs with the band, to promote it. "It's been a pretty packed day, dude," he said.

Gibbons had an appointment to videotape a guitar lesson for a music magazine. He had decided, however, that it could wait. "It is not to my liking, per se," he said. A straw apparently helps beer go down quick. Gibbons made frequent trips to the bathroom, trotting through the bar, a slight figure with a little paunch, leaving double takes in his wake. A TV was showing footage of a tornado. Once, in Kentucky, Gibbons recalled, "a tornado preceded our arrival and passed us by. It so happened that there was a bra-and-panty factory in town, and the tornado tore it up. We were greeted by the sight of bras and panties hanging from trees for five miles."



Billy F. Gibbons

Gibbons wanted to see an early Leo Fender Telecaster prototype known as No. 0009, which Dan Courtenay, the owner of Chelsea Guitars, on West Twenty-third Street, had in his shop. He summoned his entourage—his tour manager and his fiancée, Gilligan Stillwater—and they pushed off from the Rihga in a town car driven by a man with a long waxed mustache. Stillwater, who had known Gibbons for twenty years and had decided finally to marry him, because, she said, "I got tired and slowed down," was amazed to see a woman riding a bicycle, wearing a dress but no helmet. "That's New York, Miss Gilligan," the driver said.

Gibbons strode into the guitar shop like a brigadier general. Dan Courtenay dug out various old underappreciated models. "Too much fun in here, bro," Gibbons said. Finally, Courtenay brought out the old Fender. "Number nine," Gibbons said, with feeling. He and Courtenay admired how the bobbin for the second pickup had been cut with a carpet knife. The paint on the body, metallic and red, was car paint, possibly from a Studebaker plant. This confluence pleased Gibbons. He gathered everyone for a series of photographs, with him at the center, holding No. 0009.

Gibbons decided to make a pit stop, before getting back in the car. He ran into El Quijote, a Spanish restaurant. Passing the bar on his way to the bathroom, it occurred to him that he might like another beer. The bartender opened a Corona, and then asked that Gibbons remove his hat.

Gibbons said, "*Es mi pelo*"—my hair. A joke, more or less. The bartender shrugged, took away the beer, and said, "Sorry, no service."

Gibbons let it go. Out on the street, a semicircle of paparazzi had formed.

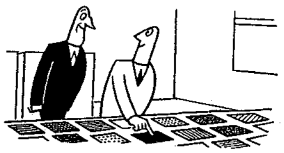
"Take off your shades, man!" one called out.

"No way, that's his trademark," another replied.

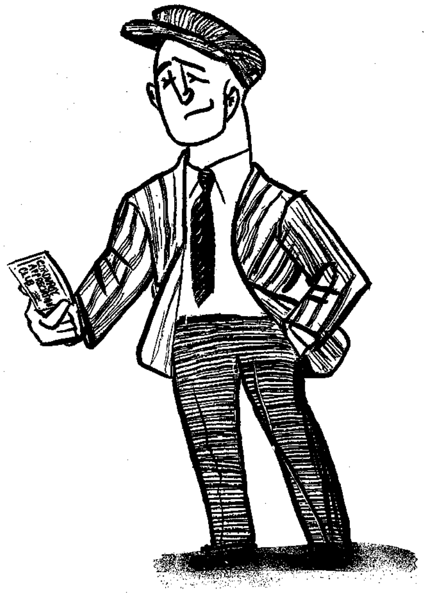
Gibbons kept the sunglasses on.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

TEXTURE DEPT.
WALING



Several years ago, Miles Rohan was out of work and feeling lonely. He thought it might be nice to belong to a social club, like the Elks or the Shriners, and, in the absence of any invitations, decided to start his own. He noticed that he'd accumulated a good amount of corduroy clothing in his twenty-some years, figured that that ought to count for something, and made a theme of it: a corduroy club. He established a Web site, printed up membership cards, and hit the streets to recruit—in bars, on subway platforms, wherever he saw people wearing corduroy. "It was a complete failure," he said the other day. "Someone"—a particularly disagreeable accostee, he believes—"hacked into the Web site and destroyed it."



Corduroy Clubber

Rohan, whose given name is Michael (he switched after watching "Sleeper," and identifying with Woody Allen's character, Miles Monroe), was recounting the aborted attempt in the company of about a hundred similarly dressed guests at the initial meeting of the revived Corduroy Appreciation Club. In the intervening years, he said, he had found a new job (at Nickelodeon), got married, and detected an uptick in general corduroy wearing: all good things. His wife, Jordana Furcht, who is a graphic designer, helped him with a sharper-looking batch of cards (they feature an image of a humpback whale, next to the phrase "All Wales Welcome," and have real corduroy pasted on the back), and a few weeks ago he set out to canvass again. He brought fistfuls of cards into clothing stores and stealthily deposited them in the pockets of corduroy garments, hoping that shoppers would discover them and visit his new Web site. ("Banana Republic was scary—I almost got caught, because the pockets there are too small," he said.) He chased a well-corded man into a Virgin Megastore. ("He looked cool, but he was completely freaked out by me.") He stood on Astor Place holding a sign that said, "Do You Like Corduroy?"

The meeting took place on November 11th—"because 11/11 is the date that most resembles corduroy," Rohan said—in the Back Room, a Lower East Side bar said to be owned by Tim Robbins (who sometimes wears corduroy jackets) and the retired hockey star Mark Messier (who certainly does not). Guests were asked to wear at least two corduroy items and donate a dollar; in return, they were entitled to whale buttons and ribbed peanut-butter cookies.

"So are there, like, corduroy drink specials?" one guest asked. There were not, and it appeared that Rohan, who wore a khaki-colored corduroy suit with moderately wide wales, a red corduroy hat, and a corduroy watchband, had not even considered the essential question "What is the drink that most resembles corduroy?" A woman, thinking of smoke and the color brown, asked for whiskey. Someone else suggested a Manhattan: "It's got to be something layered, with texture."

Chris Lindland, the creator of Cordarounds—trousers made of horizontal corduroy—and the evening's keynote speaker, had flown in from San Francisco. Lindland had with him a sample of his latest creation, "waffle cords," which look as though they are covered with Braille.

The club's new members, including a toddler dressed in OshKosh corduroy overalls and a man wearing Italian slanted-wale pants, assembled in front of the bar's fireplace, many sitting on furniture upholstered in velvet, a fustian rival. Betsy Franjola, the fabric manager for Karl Lagerfeld, delivered a history lesson, citing competing claims about the etymology of the word "corduroy": one story has the term originating in seventeenth-century France (*corde du roi:* the king's cloth), and another traces it to thirteenth-century Manchester, otherwise known as Cottonopolis. Lindland, when his time came, had a controversy of his own to clear up: horizontal cords, he said, do not make you look fat.

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Corduroy was then given to the director Wes Anderson's tailor, Vahram Mateosian, who, in addition to making Anderson's signature narrow corduroy suits, also outfitted the actors in "The Royal Tenenbaums" in numerous corduroy items. Mateosian stood near the bar, holding his framed certificate and looking bewildered. "I thought one of my buddies down on Wall Street was playing a joke on me," he said, recalling how Rohan had shown up in his store, on Fifth Avenue, a week earlier. Mateosian was not wearing any corduroy. "It's not cold enough," he said.

Rohan announced that the next meeting would be held on January 11th, which is the date that second-most resembles corduroy.

—*Ben McGrath*

MOONLIGHTING DEPT.
MOB APPEAL

"It was May 14, 2002. I was in my office with two policemen," Gianrico Carofiglio, an Italian anti-Mafia prosecutor, began. "And then my phone rang. The two guys that were in my room look at me because my face was—how can I say?—strange. They didn't know what was going on."

The caller wasn't a gravel-voiced tipster or a menacing don. It was a book editor, phoning to say that he wanted to publish a manuscript that Carofiglio had submitted. Carofiglio is not only a prominent *procuratore della Repubblica;* now he is also one of his country's best-selling authors. He made a name in the nineties, arresting Puglian Mob bosses like Il Cecato (the Blind Man) and Lo Spazzino (the Street-Cleaner); last year, he broke up a syndicate that enslaved prostitutes and sold their newborn babies. By day, Carofiglio conducts searches, interrogates suspects, and leads trials. By night—or, more specifically, during the early-evening hours—he writes crisp, ironical novels that are as much love stories and philosophical treatises as they are legal thrillers. He inhabits the roles of crime fighter and crime writer with an almost Supermannish ease.

"I was a judge in the beginning of my career," he was saying the other day, at the Italian Cultural Institute, on Park Avenue. "But then I switched to a prosecutor, because I'm kind of a cop in my soul." Carofiglio, a handsome man, has a five-o'clock shadow, a leftover suntan, and a hairline like Eliot Spitzer's. He was there to read from his first book, "Involuntary Witness," which has been translated into thirteen languages and was released last month in the United States. (In Italy, the book will become a television series, making its protagonist, Guido Guerrieri, a Continental Perry Mason.) "If somebody asked"—Carofiglio pronounced the word with two syllables—"me some years ago what is my most absurd dream, I would have said presenting a book, my book, in translation, in New York City." (Carofiglio is an aficionado of American culture. His "ideal library," he wrote recently in the magazine *Crime Time,* would include the movie "Manhattan," CDs by REM and Bruce Springsteen, and books by J. D. Salinger.)

Carofiglio told the crowd that since childhood he'd been saying that he wanted to be a writer, but by his late thirties he had managed to produce only a couple of technical manuals, on witness psychology and cross-examination techniques. "If you say something like this when you are approaching the year forty," he said, "you are something more than pathetic." (Guido, a defense attorney, suffers from a similar sense of midlife ennui.) There were also practical constraints. "At one point, I had an armored Fiat," Carofiglio said. "I can tell you, that was not fun. There were plots against me. One was with a bazooka. I had four bodyguards; I was supposed to go with them twenty-four hours a day."

For the reading, Carofiglio had selected a passage in which Guido ponders the side effects of an anti-depressant that has been prescribed for him: "What do you do in the case of a prolonged and painful erection? Do you go to a hospital holding the thing in your hand? Do you put on *very* comfortable underpants?" His solution is to flush the pills down the toilet, pour a glass of whiskey, and put on a videotape of "Chariots of Fire."

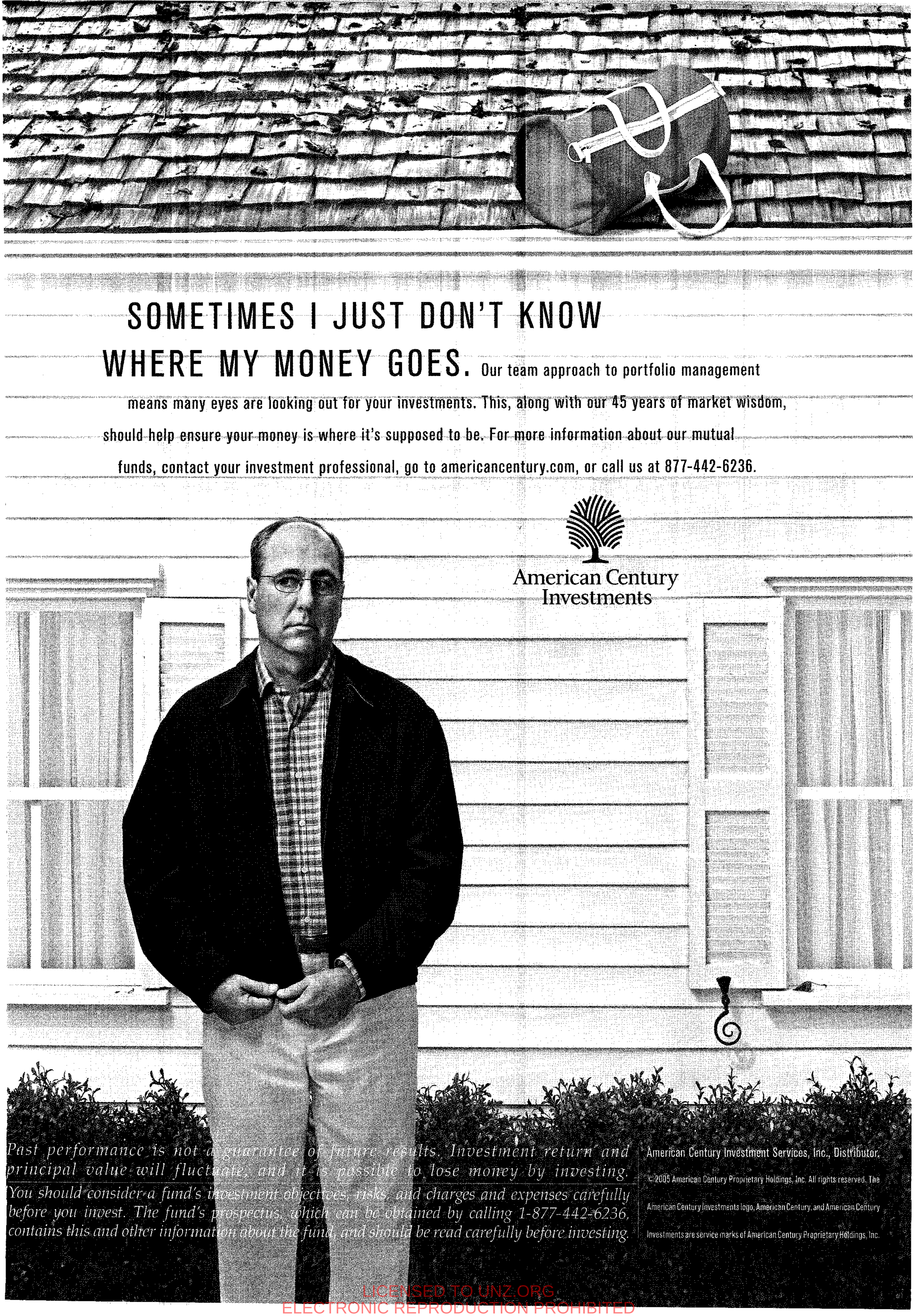
Later, Carofiglio admitted that his stay in New York had been a respite from the gruelling routine of the courtroom. "I went to an excellent place called Bed Bath & Beyond," he said. "I went to a club called Hiro, and I had lunch in Pastis." The next day, he was flying back to Bari. "Monday," he said. "Monday will be awful. I have to start a special case. It is a file against some oncologists who falsified papers for their clients to allow them to be treated in a special institute. People with little problems in the nose—and people with cancer have to wait."

And there are other threats to the peace. A few months ago, Carofiglio received an e-mail from a fan of "Involuntary Witness." It read, "Watch what you do to Guido. Remember 'Misery'?"

—*Lauren Collins*

POSTSCRIPT

A letter arrived the other day bearing the news that Cecille Shawn, the wife of William Shawn, who was the editor of *The New Yorker* from 1952 to 1987, had passed away. The letter was from one of the Shawns' three children, the composer Allen Shawn, and he wrote to say that "our mother died peacefully at home on October 30th. She was ninety-nine years old." Cecille Shawn, who was born Cecille Lyon, grew up in Chicago and, as a young woman, worked as the editor of the features page of the Chicago *Daily News*. She created a game using a character named Blundering Ben, in which readers scored points by finding misused words and phrases. When she was eighteen, Cecille was introduced to William Shawn, and he wrote in his diary, "Today I met my future wife." They married in 1928 and spent much of the next year living in Paris, where Mr. Shawn earned a living playing jazz piano in a club called La Cloche. It was their only trip overseas. When they returned to the States, the Shawns moved from Chicago to New York. The Depression was on, but Cecille was able to find a job as a freelance "fact-finder" at *The New Yorker*, which was in the eighth year of its existence. She asked the editors if her husband could help with the work. As Allen wrote, "She soon happily bowed out of her own job at the magazine," where her husband thrived for the next half-century.



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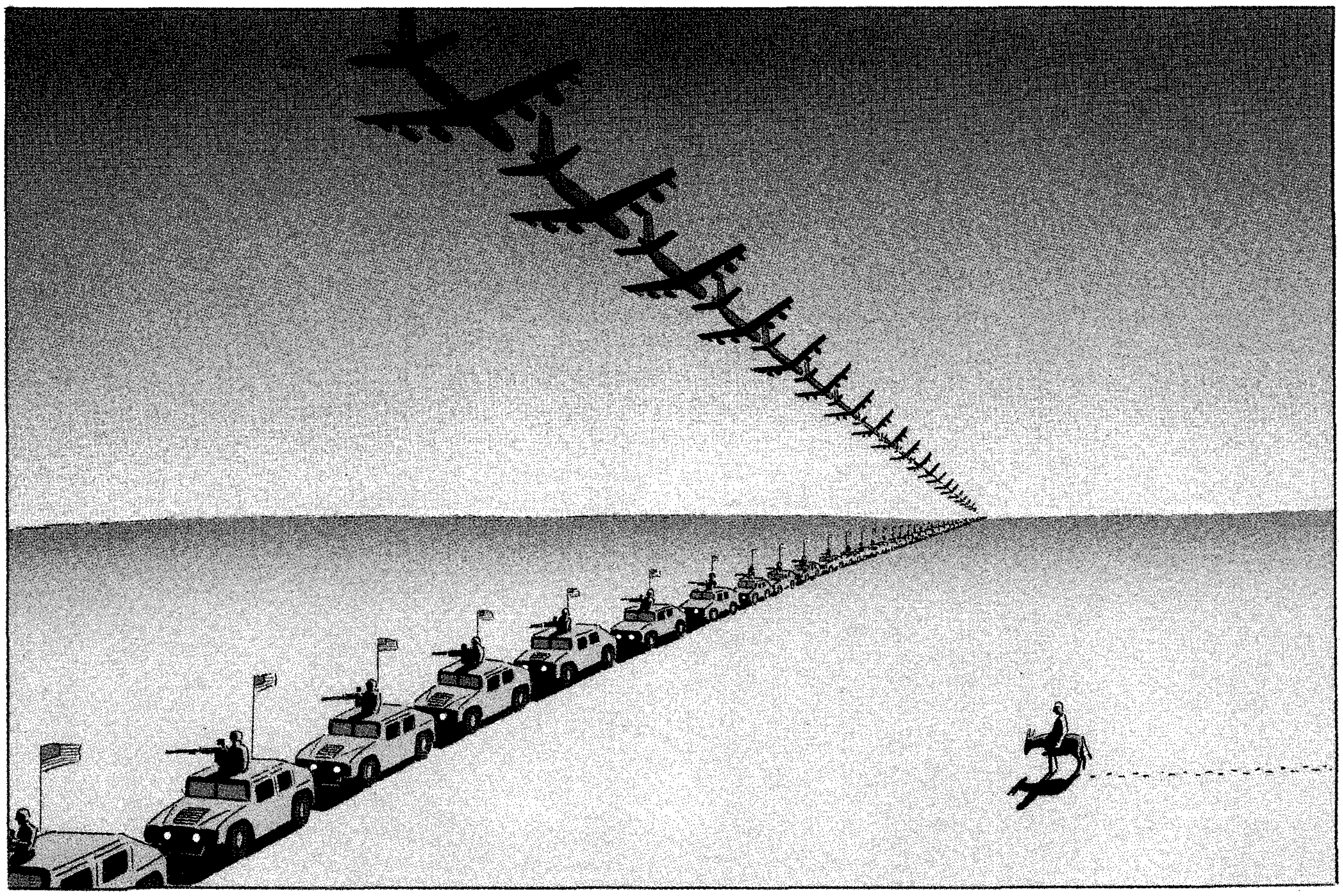
ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

UP IN THE AIR

Where is the Iraq war headed next?

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

In recent weeks, there has been widespread speculation that President George W. Bush, confronted by diminishing approval ratings and dissent within his own party, will begin pulling American troops out of Iraq next year. The Administration's best-case scenario is that the parliamentary election scheduled for December 15th will produce a coalition government that will join the Administration in calling for a withdrawal to begin in the spring. By then, the White House hopes, the new government will be capable of handling the insurgency. In a speech on November 19th, Bush repeated the latest Administration catchphrase: "As Iraqis stand up, we will stand down." He added, "When our commanders on the ground tell me that Iraqi forces can defend their freedom, our troops will come home with the honor they have earned." One sign of the political pressure on the Administration to prepare for a withdrawal came last week, when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Fox News that the current level of American troops would not have to be maintained "for very much longer," because the Iraqis were getting better at fighting the insurgency.



The Air Force is uneasy about a shift toward airpower and away from ground troops. For one thing, who will call in the strikes?

GUY BILLOUT

A high-level Pentagon war planner told me, however, that he has seen scant indication that the President would authorize a significant pullout of American troops if he believed that it would impede the war against the insurgency. There are several proposals currently under review by the White House and the Pentagon; the most ambitious calls for American combat forces to be reduced from a hundred and fifty-five thousand troops to fewer than eighty thousand by next fall, with all American forces officially designated "combat" to be pulled out of the area by the summer of 2008. In terms of implementation, the planner said, "the drawdown plans that I'm familiar with are condition-based, event-driven, and not in a specific time frame"—that is, they depend on the ability of a new Iraqi government to defeat the insurgency. (A Pentagon spokesman said that the Administration had not made any decisions and had "no plan to leave, only a plan to complete the mission.")

A key element of the drawdown plans, not mentioned in the President's public statements, is that the departing American troops will be replaced by American airpower. Quick, deadly strikes by U.S. warplanes are seen as a way to improve dramatically the combat capability of even the weakest Iraqi combat units. The danger, military experts have told me, is that, while the number of American casualties would decrease as ground troops are withdrawn, the over-all level of violence and the number of Iraqi fatalities would increase unless there are stringent controls over who bombs what.

“We’re not planning to diminish the war,” Patrick Clawson, the deputy director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, told me. Clawson’s views often mirror the thinking of the men and women around Vice-President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. “We just want to change the mix of the forces doing the fighting—Iraqi infantry with American support and greater use of airpower. The rule now is to commit Iraqi forces into combat only in places where they are sure to win. The pace of commitment, and withdrawal, depends on their success in the battlefield.”

He continued, “We want to draw down our forces, but the President is prepared to tough this one out. There is a very deep feeling on his part that the issue of Iraq was settled by the American people at the polling places in 2004.” The war against the insurgency “may end up being a nasty and murderous civil war in Iraq, but we and our allies would still win,” he said. “As long as the Kurds and the Shiites stay on our side, we’re set to go. There’s no sense that the world is caving in. We’re in the middle of a seven-year slog in Iraq, and eighty per cent of the Iraqis are receptive to our message.”

One Pentagon adviser told me, “There are always contingency plans, but why withdraw and take a chance? I don’t think the President will go for it”—until the insurgency is broken. “He’s not going to back off. This is bigger than domestic politics.”

Current and former military and intelligence officials have told me that the President remains convinced that it is his personal mission to bring democracy to Iraq, and that he is impervious to political pressure, even from fellow-Republicans. They also say that he disparages any information that conflicts with his view of how the war is proceeding.

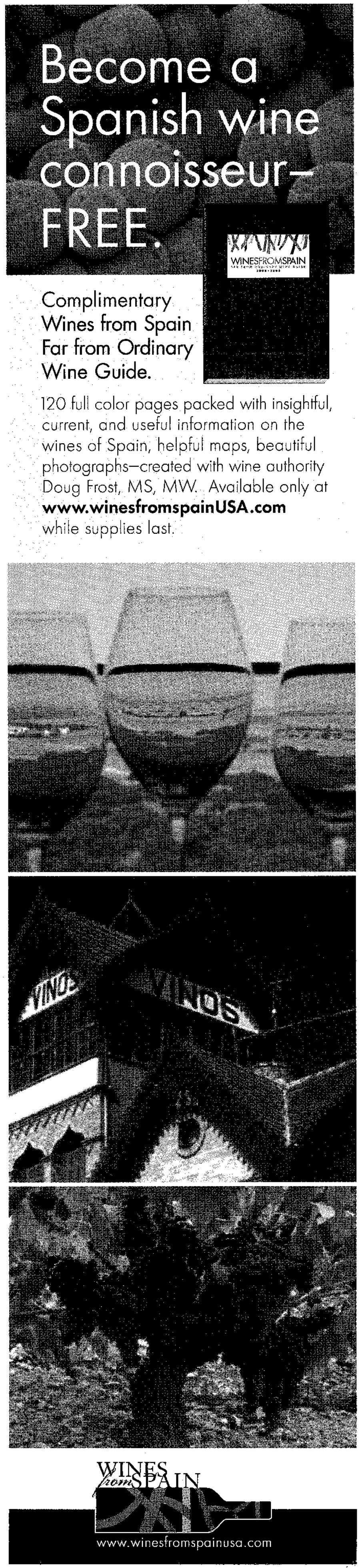
Bush’s closest advisers have long been aware of the religious nature of his policy commitments. In recent interviews, one former senior official, who served in Bush’s first term, spoke extensively about the connection between the President’s religious faith and his view of the war in Iraq. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the former official said, he was told that Bush felt that “God put me here” to deal with the war on terror. The President’s belief was fortified by the Republican sweep in the 2002 congressional elections; Bush saw the victory as a purposeful message from God that “he’s the man,” the former official said. Publicly, Bush depicted his reëlection as a referendum on the war; privately, he spoke of it as another manifestation of divine purpose.

The former senior official said that after the election he made a lengthy inspection visit to Iraq and reported his findings to Bush in the White House: “I said to the President, ‘We’re not winning the war.’ And he asked, ‘Are we *losing*?’ I said, ‘Not yet.’ ” The President, he said, “appeared displeased” with that answer.

“I tried to tell him,” the former senior official said. “And he couldn’t hear it.”

There are grave concerns within the military about the capability of the U.S. Army to sustain two or three more years of combat in Iraq. Michael O’Hanlon, a specialist on military issues at the Brookings Institution, told me, “The people in the institutional Army feel they don’t have the luxury of deciding troop levels, or even participating in the debate. They’re planning on staying the course until 2009. I can’t believe the Army thinks that it will happen, because there’s no sustained drive to increase the size of the regular Army.” O’Hanlon noted that “if the President decides to stay the present course in Iraq some troops would be compelled to serve fourth and fifth tours of combat by 2007 and 2008, which could have serious consequences for morale and competency levels.”

Many of the military’s most senior generals are deeply frustrated, but they say nothing in public, because they don’t want to jeopardize their careers. The Administration has “so terrified the generals that they know they won’t go public,” a former defense official said. A retired senior C.I.A. officer with knowledge of Iraq told me that one of his colleagues recently participated in a congressional tour there. The legislators were repeatedly told, in meetings with enlisted men, junior officers, and generals that “things were fucked up.” But in a subsequent teleconference with Rumsfeld, he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said, the generals kept those criticisms to themselves.

One person with whom the Pentagon's top commanders have shared their private views for decades is Representative John Murtha, of Pennsylvania, the senior Democrat on the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. The President and his key aides were enraged when, on November 17th, Murtha gave a speech in the House calling for a withdrawal of troops within six months. The speech was filled with devastating information. For example, Murtha reported that the number of attacks in Iraq has increased from a hundred and fifty a week to more than seven hundred a week in the past year. He said that an estimated fifty thousand American soldiers will suffer "from what I call battle fatigue" in the war, and he said that the Americans were seen as "the common enemy" in Iraq. He also took issue with one of the White House's claims—that foreign fighters were playing the major role in the insurgency. Murtha said that American soldiers "haven't captured any in this latest activity"—the continuing battle in western Anbar province, near the border with Syria. "So this idea that they're coming in from outside, we still think there's only seven per cent."

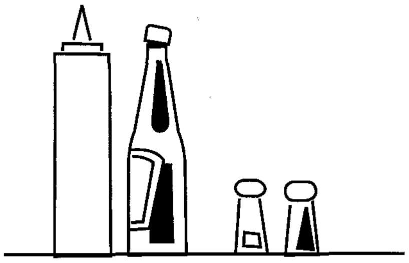
Murtha's call for a speedy American pullout only seemed to strengthen the White House's resolve. Administration officials "are beyond angry at him, because he is a serious threat to their policy—both on substance and politically," the former defense official said. Speaking at the Osan Air Force base, in South Korea, two days after Murtha's speech, Bush said, "The terrorists regard Iraq as the central front in their war against humanity. . . . If they're not stopped, the terrorists will be able to advance their agenda to develop weapons of mass destruction, to destroy Israel, to intimidate Europe, and to break our will and blackmail our government into isolation. I'm going to make you this commitment: this is not going to happen on my watch."

"The President is more determined than ever to stay the course," the former defense official said. "He doesn't feel any pain. Bush is a believer in the adage 'People may suffer and die, but the Church advances.'" He said that the President had become more detached, leaving more issues to Karl Rove and Vice-President Cheney. "They keep him in the gray world of religious idealism, where he wants to be anyway," the former defense official said. Bush's public appearances, for example, are generally scheduled in front of friendly audiences, most often at military bases. Four decades ago, President Lyndon Johnson, who was also confronted with an increasingly unpopular war, was limited to similar public forums. "Johnson knew he was a prisoner in the White House," the former official said, "but Bush has no idea."

Within the military, the prospect of using airpower as a substitute for American troops on the ground has caused great unease. For one thing, Air Force commanders, in particular, have deep-seated objections to the possibility that Iraqis eventually will be responsible for target selection. "Will the Iraqis call in air strikes in order to snuff rivals, or other warlords, or to snuff members of your own sect and blame someone else?" another senior military planner now on assignment in the Pentagon asked. "Will some Iraqis be targeting on behalf of Al Qaeda, or the insurgency, or the Iranians?"

"It's a serious business," retired Air Force General Charles Horner, who was in charge of allied bombing during the 1991 Gulf War, said. "The Air Force has always had concerns about people ordering air strikes who are not Air Force forward air controllers. We need people on active duty to think it out, and they will. There has to be training to be sure that somebody is not trying to get even with somebody else." (Asked for a comment, the Pentagon spokesman said there were plans in place for such training. He also noted that Iraq had no offensive airpower of its own, and thus would have to rely on the United States for some time.)

The American air war inside Iraq today is perhaps the most significant—and underreported—aspect of the fight against the insurgency. The military authorities in Baghdad and Washington do not provide the press with a daily accounting of missions that Air Force, Navy, and Marine units fly or of the tonnage they drop, as was routinely done during the Vietnam War. One insight into the scope of the bombing in Iraq was supplied by the Marine Corps during the height of the siege of Falluja in the fall of 2004. "With a massive Marine air and ground offensive under way," a Marine press release said, "Marine close air support continues to put high-tech steel on target. . . . Flying missions day and night for weeks, the fixed wing aircraft of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing are ensuring battlefield success on the front line." Since the beginning of the war, the press release said, the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing alone had dropped more than five hundred thousand tons of ordnance. "This number is likely to be much higher by the end of operations," Major Mike Sexton said. In the battle for the city, more than seven hundred Americans were killed or wounded; U.S. officials did not release estimates of civilian dead, but press reports at the time told of women and children killed in the bombardments.



In recent months, the tempo of American bombing seems to have increased. Most of the targets appear to be in the hostile, predominantly Sunni provinces that surround Baghdad and along the Syrian border. As yet, neither Congress nor the public has engaged in a significant discussion or debate about the air war.

The insurgency operates mainly in crowded urban areas, and Air Force warplanes rely on sophisticated, laser-guided bombs to avoid civilian casualties. These bombs home in on targets that must be "painted," or illuminated, by laser beams directed by ground units. "The pilot doesn't identify the target as seen in the pre-brief"—the instructions provided before takeoff—a former high-level intelligence official told me. "The guy with the laser is the targeteer. Not the pilot. Often you get a 'hot-read'"—from a military unit on the ground—"and you drop your bombs with no communication with the guys on the ground. You don't want to break radio silence. The people on the ground are calling in targets that the pilots can't verify." He added, "And we're going to turn this process over to the Iraqis?"

The second senior military planner told me that there are essentially two types of targeting now being used in Iraq: a deliberate site-selection process that works out of air-operations centers in the region, and "adaptive targeting"—supportive bombing by prepositioned or loitering warplanes that are suddenly alerted to firefights or targets of opportunity by military units on the ground. "The bulk of what we do today is adaptive," the officer said, "and it's divorced from any operational air planning. Airpower can be used as a tool of internal political coercion, and my attitude is that I can't imagine that we will give that power to the Iraqis."

This military planner added that even today, with Americans doing the targeting, "there is no sense of an air campaign, or a strategic vision. We are just whacking targets—it's a reversion to the Stone Age. There's no operational art. That's what happens when you give targeting to the Army—they hit what the local commander wants to hit."

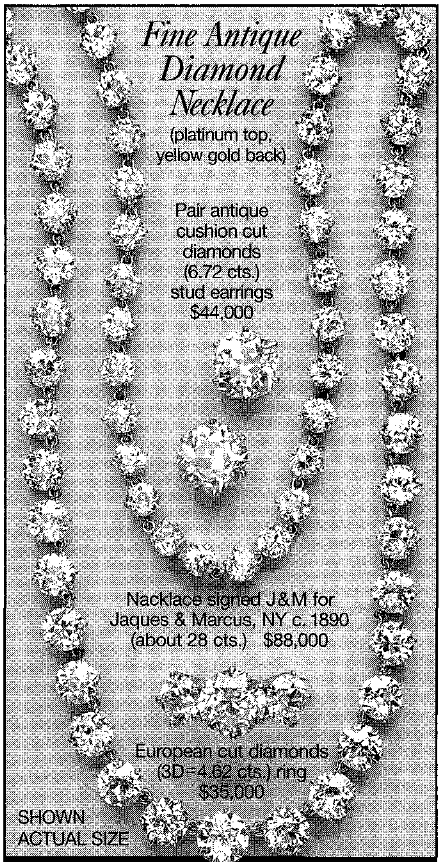
One senior Pentagon consultant I spoke to said he was optimistic that "American air will immediately make the Iraqi Army that much better." But he acknowledged that he, too, had concerns about Iraqi targeting. "We have the most expensive eyes in the sky right now," the consultant said. "But a lot of Iraqis want to settle old scores. Who is going to have authority to call in air strikes? There's got to be a behavior-based rule."

General John Jumper, who retired last month after serving four years as the Air Force chief of staff, was "in favor of certification of those Iraqis who will be allowed to call in strikes," the Pentagon consultant told me. "I don't know if it will be approved. The regular Army generals were resisting it to the last breath, despite the fact that they would benefit the most from it."

A Pentagon consultant with close ties to the officials in the Vice-President's office and the Pentagon who advocated the war said that the Iraqi penchant for targeting tribal and personal enemies with artillery and mortar fire had created "impatience and resentment" inside the military. He believed that the Air Force's problems with Iraqi targeting might be addressed by the formation of U.S.-Iraqi transition teams, whose American members would be drawn largely from Special Forces troops. This consultant said that there were plans to integrate between two hundred and three hundred Special Forces members into Iraqi units, which was seen as a compromise aimed at meeting the Air Force's demand to vet Iraqis who were involved in targeting. But in practice, the consultant added, it meant that "the Special Ops people will soon allow Iraqis to begin calling in the targets."

Robert Pape, a political-science professor at the University of Chicago, who has written widely on American airpower, and who taught for three years at the Air Force's School of Advanced Airpower Studies, in Alabama, predicted that the air war "will get very ugly" if targeting is turned over to the Iraqis. This would be especially true, he said, if the Iraqis continued to operate as the U.S. Army and Marines have done—plowing through Sunni strongholds on search-and-destroy missions. "If we encourage the Iraqis to clear and hold their own areas, and use airpower to stop the insurgents from penetrating the cleared areas, it could be useful," Pape said. "The risk is that we will encourage the Iraqis to do search-and-destroy, and they would be less judicious about using airpower—and the violence would go up. More civilians will be killed, which means more insurgents will be created."

Even American bombing on behalf of an improved, well-trained Iraqi Army would not necessarily be any more successful against the insurgency. "It's not going to work," said Andrew Brookes, the former director of airpower studies at the Royal Air Force's advanced staff college, who is now at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, in London. "Can you put a lid on the insurgency with bombing?" Brookes said. "No. You can concentrate in one area, but the guys will spring up in another town." The inevitable reliance on Iraqi ground troops' targeting would also create conflicts. "I don't see your guys dancing to the tune of someone else," Brookes said. He added that he and many other experts "don't believe that airpower is a solution to the problems inside Iraq at all.



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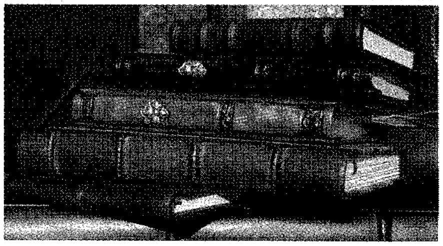

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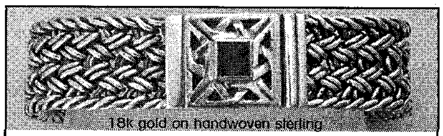

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Replacing boots on the ground with airpower didn't work in Vietnam, did it?"

The Air Force's worries have been subordinated, so far, to the political needs of the White House. The Administration's immediate political goal after the December elections is to show that the day-to-day conduct of the war can be turned over to the newly trained and equipped Iraqi military. It has already planned heavily scripted change-of-command ceremonies, complete with the lowering of American flags at bases and the raising of Iraqi ones.

Some officials in the State Department, the C.I.A., and British Prime Minister Tony Blair's government have settled on their candidate of choice for the December elections—Iyad Allawi, the secular Shiite who served until this spring as Iraq's interim Prime Minister. They believe that Allawi can gather enough votes in the election to emerge, after a round of political bargaining, as Prime Minister. A former senior British adviser told me that Blair was convinced that Allawi "is the best hope." The fear is that a government dominated by religious Shiites, many of whom are close to Iran, would give Iran greater political and military influence inside Iraq. Allawi could counter Iran's influence; also, he would be far more supportive and coöperative if the Bush Administration began a drawdown of American combat forces in the coming year.

Blair has assigned a small team of operatives to provide political help to Allawi, the former adviser told me. He also said that there was talk late this fall, with American concurrence, of urging Ahmad Chalabi, a secular Shiite, to join forces in a coalition with Allawi during the post-election negotiations to form a government. Chalabi, who is notorious for his role in promoting flawed intelligence on weapons of mass destruction before the war, is now a deputy Prime Minister. He and Allawi were bitter rivals while in exile.

A senior United Nations diplomat told me that he was puzzled by the high American and British hopes for Allawi. "I know a lot of people want Allawi, but I think he's been a terrific disappointment," the diplomat said. "He doesn't seem to be building a strong alliance, and at the moment it doesn't look like he will do very well in the election."

The second Pentagon consultant told me, "If Allawi becomes Prime Minister, we can say, 'There's a moderate, urban, educated leader now in power who does not want to deprive women of their rights.' He would ask us to leave, but he would allow us to keep Special Forces operations inside Iraq—to keep an American presence the right way. Mission accomplished. A coup for Bush."

A former high-level intelligence official cautioned that it was probably "too late" for any American withdrawal plan to work without further bloodshed. The constitution approved by Iraqi voters in October "will be interpreted by the Kurds and the Shiites to proceed with their plans for autonomy," he said. "The Sunnis will continue to believe that if they can get rid of the Americans they can still win. And there still is no credible way to establish security for American troops."

The fear is that a precipitous U.S. withdrawal would inevitably trigger a Sunni-Shiite civil war. In many areas, that war has, in a sense, already begun, and the United States military is being drawn into the sectarian violence. An American Army officer who took part in the assault on Tal Afar, in the north of Iraq, earlier this fall, said that an American infantry brigade was placed in the position of providing a cordon of security around the besieged city for Iraqi forces, most of them Shiites, who were "rounding up any Sunnis on the basis of whatever a Shiite said to them." The officer went on, "They were killing Sunnis on behalf of the Shiites," with the active participation of a militia unit led by a retired American Special Forces soldier. "People like me have gotten so downhearted," the officer added.

Meanwhile, as the debate over troop reductions continues, the covert war in Iraq has expanded in recent months to Syria. A composite American Special Forces team, known as an S.M.U., for "special-mission unit," has been ordered, under stringent cover, to target suspected supporters of the Iraqi insurgency across the border. (The Pentagon had no comment.) "It's a powder keg," the Pentagon consultant said of the tactic. "But, if we hit an insurgent network in Iraq without hitting the guys in Syria who are part of it, the guys in Syria would get away. When you're fighting an insurgency, you have to strike everywhere—and at once." ♦

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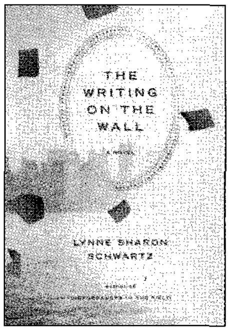

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GETTING STARTED

BY BRUCE McCALL

Congratulations on choosing your new Type A-30/Type A-31/Type Q-2/Type Q-3/Type AQ-1/Type AQ-2/Type AQ-2.5/Type AQ-2000 (Type AQ-2000 is discontinued) handheld portable unit.

To operate in Cell Phone mode, see pp. 10-14. An unfamiliar voice will answer when you place your first call. A non-refundable fifty-dollar surcharge will appear on your monthly bill if you press END before hearing the complete message.

To operate in Camera mode, see pp. 15-19 or press any green key.

To operate in 3-D Cam, Spy-Cam, or Sky-Cam mode, turn the Microsoft Snoop-Cam function (on thumbwheel below viewfinder) to ON/OFF. If your unit is not a Type AQ-1, you will need a fifty-foot KordPak (see Accessories, pp. 520-608) to prevent reverse power surgeback.

Never leave your unit in a freezer, convection oven, or cyclotron unless the Cell Phone function is set to END CHARGING (U symbol; Ü symbol on German-language units).

The default setting for the Entertainment function is Adults Only. To switch to Mature, XXX, or Taboo, gently slap unit until the function you have chosen appears. Your credit card is not required at this time.

To operate in Cheese Grater mode, see pp. 20-26.

Important: If your unit has three red keys on the back (see diagram, p. 7), carefully lay it down and evacuate the premises.

To operate in Magic Fingers mode, see pp. 27-36. (If you are not a licensed masseur/masseuse, see p. 37.)

Always grip unit lightly while cradling it in the palm of your hand, with the logo facing *up*. The unit's "creeping" tendency is normal. If unit becomes hot to the touch, use the Cell Phone function to call your local firehouse or volunteer fire department.

Do not attempt to manually fold the attached satellite dish.

To operate in Spot Welding mode, see pp. 38-42. Welding mask included with Type AQ-2.5 units only.

To operate in Pants Pressing mode, see pp. 43-47.

Note: Your unit is equipped to predict the winner of the next Irish parliamentary election (Leprechaun key), but you *must* enter candidate names on the Gaming keypad at least twenty-four hours before voting begins.

MICHAEL CRAWFORD

To operate in Radio Habana Shortwave mode, see pp. 48-52.

To operate in Men's Beard Shave mode, see pp. 53-55.

To operate in Ladies' Leg Shave mode, see pp. 56-57.

Microphone-feedback-adjustment dial on Type AQ-3 units is found on the faceplate (see Unit Overview, p. 2). In Types A-1 through A-18, the microphone-feedback-adjustment dial is the # key. Press until you hear a squealing noise.

To operate in Pencil Sharpener mode, see pp. 58-62.

To operate in Two Carolinas Redneck Culture Museum Audio Tour mode, press TOK2ME button on the thumbwheel after seeing pp. 63-64.

This unit has been approved by the Association of American Underwriters as resistant to vibration from Antarctic drilling.

To operate in Marine Haircut mode, see pp. 65-95.

To operate in Kaleidoscope mode, see pp. 96-327.

To operate in Pedometer mode, see pp. 328-329. *Do not* move your feet while switching to Pedometer setting.

Do not attempt to read the Controls/Functions section (pp. 1-4) without the help of a licensed engineer. A list of recommended engineers can be found on p. 400.

Recording the purchase date of your unit with your lawyer or guardian could void your warranty.

If you are using your unit in the horse latitudes (see map, pp. 202-223), it cannot be switched from Marine Haircut mode to Calculator mode without a Supplementary BatteryPak or plug-in access to a power grid.

Calculator-mode note: Never attempt to compute the distance to Betelgeuse from earth while watching C-SPAN. (See p. 401.)

To operate in Sonar mode, see pp. 402-408. Sonar mode operation may interfere with Cell Phone reception.

To operate G.P.S. function (Types A-3, A-2, A-1.5 only), register your whereabouts before startup by aligning Venus, the nearest Wal-Mart, and the heel of your left shoe. A Kangaroo iconograph should begin flashing on the screen.

If you plan to use your unit as a Cell Phone only, disregard this paragraph. It is unnecessary to preset any logarithms.

Your unit (see Type list above) has become obsolete since purchase date. Do *not* attempt to discard it in a slag pile, bog, recycling receptacle, or mine pit. Switch off unit before destroying. Any person throwing away a unit without switching it off will be reported to the Department of Homeland Security. ♦

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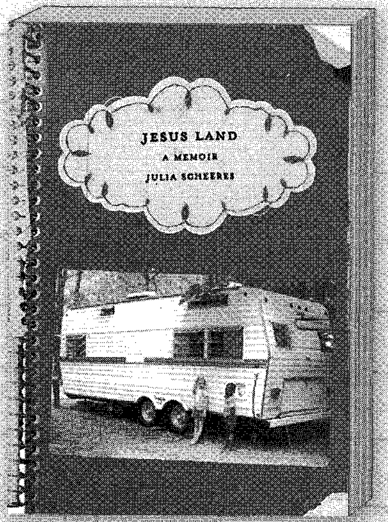

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COUNTERPOINT

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

MAN OF LETTERS

Matthew Carter's life in type design.

BY ALEC WILKINSON

Matthew Carter is often described as the most widely read man in the world. Carter designs typefaces. He is universally acknowledged as the most significant designer of type in America, and as having only one or two peers in Europe. A well regarded British type designer named Dave Farey once told a reporter, "There's Matthew Carter, and then there's the rest of us."

Carter is sixty-eight. He is British, and he lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He works in a room in his apartment. He has designed type for magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Wired*, *National Geographic*, and *Business Week;* and for newspapers, including the New York *Times*, the Washington *Post*, the Boston *Globe*, the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, and the *Guardian*, in London. He designed Verdana, for several years the signature typeface of Microsoft; Bell Centennial, the typeface used by A.T.&T. in the phone book; and type called Galliard, which has been used by the U.S. Postal Service on a stamp.

Carter has a partner named Cherie Cone who lives in California and sees to the business side of their firm, which is called Carter & Cone Type. Recently, he's been engaged with three projects. One involved designing type for *Le Monde*, the French newspaper, which wanted a different appearance; one, still under way, is for Yale, where Carter teaches (the university wants a typeface for its official documents, its signs, and the work of its students and faculty); and the third was for the *Times*. The *Times* wanted for its magazine an alphabet of the face it uses to print its name. All the paper had were the letters that spell "The New York Times."

A typeface customarily has two hundred and twenty-eight characters, including letters, accents, numerals, fractions, ligatures (the structures that in certain faces join letters together); commercial signs, such as those for the dollar and the euro; and punctuation marks, ampersands, and peculiars, such as asterisks and daggers for footnotes. A type designer typically produces four versions of a face: roman—that is, upright—letters, italic, bold roman, and bold italic. Such a grouping is called a family. Carter has designed sixty-two families, which include two hundred and sixty-three faces. A few designers may have designed more—no records are kept—but not many.

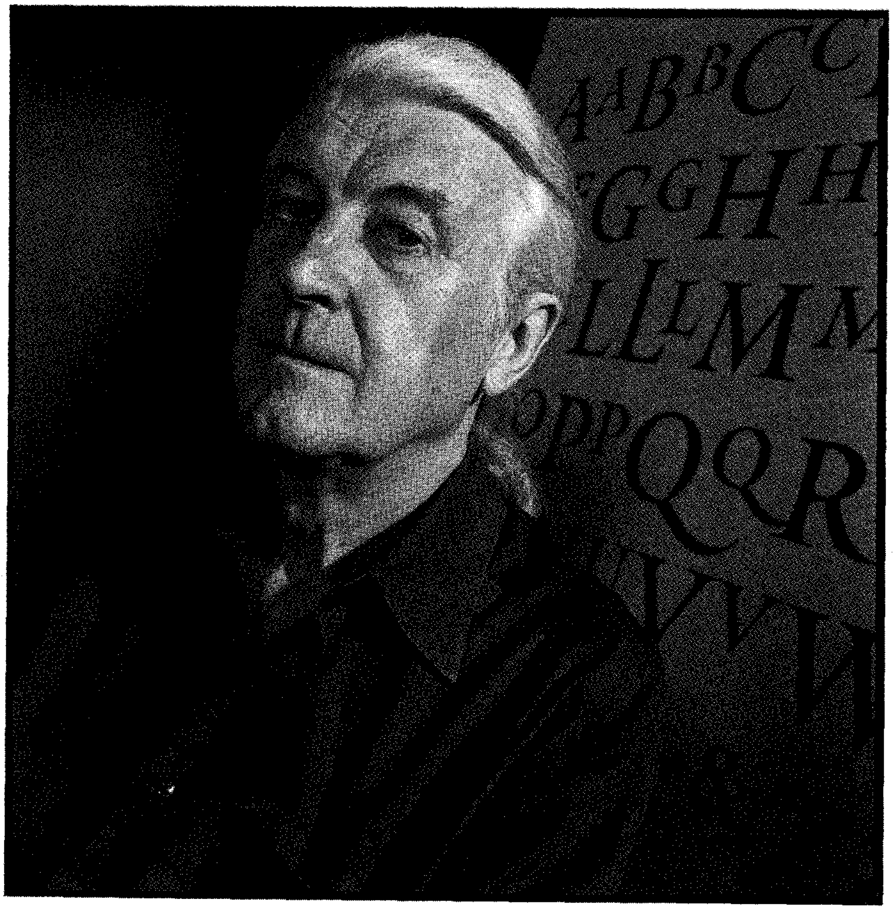
Carter designed the typeface for the phone book in 1978. He was then working for a company in New York called Mergenthaler Linotype. The previous face had been in use since 1937. A phone book lasts longer than a newspaper, but not long enough to justify its being printed on good paper with good ink. Subscribers had told the company that the current type, called Bell Gothic, was too spindly to read easily. It looked starved, they said. No known typeface read clearly at the size the company wanted. They refused to make the type larger, because adding pages was expensive. The phone company's instructions were that, regardless of the design, the same amount of information must appear on the page.

Carter tried making all the numbers different sizes from each other, as they are in certain antique typefaces, but when he saw the numbers printed it looked as if they were faintly vibrating. The phone book is set in four categories of type: one for names and numbers; one for addresses; one in boldface, mainly for businesses; and one for entries called sub-captions, which is used for listings contained under a heading—the departments of a museum, for example. Carter's solution was to make the typeface for addresses narrower, and the one for names and numbers wider and heavier, which saved space and therefore a lot of money.

There are graphic designers and artists who like to enlarge type to see whether anomalies appear. If you substantially enlarge the "B" in Bell Centennial, the white space looks like two bells lying on their sides. Carter says this was unintended.

Carter is tall and lanky. His carriage is erect. He moves gracefully. When he was young, he had brown hair, but now it is gray and long enough to be pulled back in a small ponytail, which makes him look a little like a barrister. He has blue eyes, an aquiline nose, and a cleft in his chin. He talks out of the right side of his mouth. His skin is pale. He lives with a woman named Arlene Chung, who is an artist. His manner is polished and gracious, so it takes a while to realize, mostly from hesitations in his speech, and the measured quality of his voice, that he is not given to revealing himself easily.

Choosing wine in a store, Carter looks for a bottle that has type he designed on the label. He likes to watch movies with an eye out for anachronistic appearances of type. In a movie set in 1939, he saw a document printed with a version of a typeface called Snell Roundhand Bold, an elaborate script which is used mainly for monograms, engravings, and on the menus of fancy restaurants, and which he designed in 1972. (The script was based on the handwriting of a seventeenth-century British writing master named Charles Snell.) Another time, at an antique auction, he saw a poster announcing the sale of slaves, which was being offered as genuine. He noticed that some of the writing was in a typeface invented in the nineteen-fifties. He thought it was strange that someone would take so much trouble to forge a document and then be sloppy about the typeface, but people tend to think that typefaces have always existed. Not long ago, a lawyer called him. She had a woman in her office who had tried to claim a piece of property her father had left her. The woman had been taken aback when her father's business partner presented a document, with a date of 1981, in which the father wrote that he was giving the property to the partner. Carter was able to confirm for the lawyer that he hadn't designed the typeface used in the letter until fourteen years later.

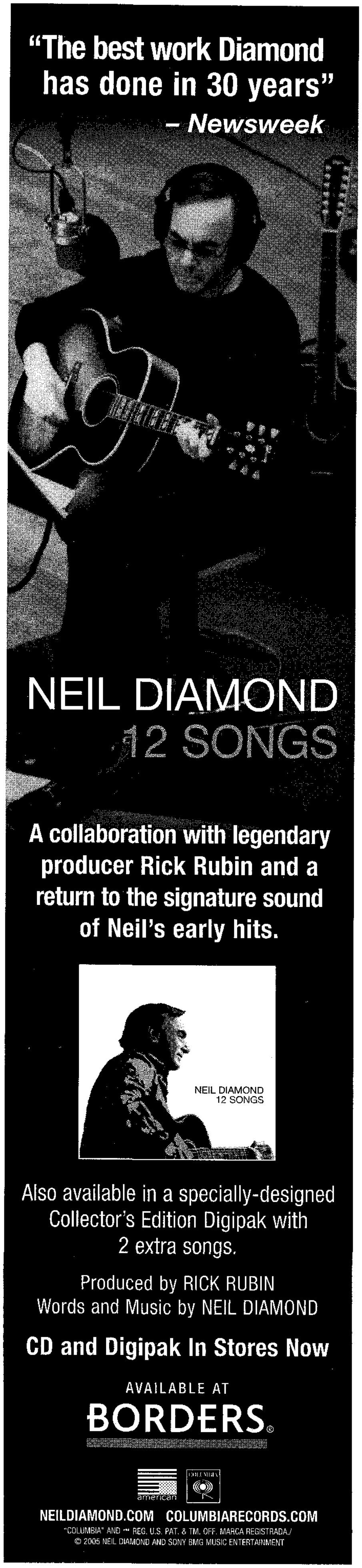


Carter works by carefully altering and correcting. Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.

Carter was born in London in 1937. His father was a typographer and a designer of books who became a historian of typography. His mother had trained to be an architect but never took the steps to qualify, and worked as a draftsman instead. Shortly after Carter turned two, the war began. The family lived in London, and when the bombing started they bought a small house in Croydon, a suburb south of the city. Carter's father was drafted, and not long after that the family was evacuated. Carter, his mother, and his younger brother were able to take very little with them, and no toys that Carter remembers. To teach him to read, his mother cut an alphabet for him from linoleum. "Gill Sans," he says, "a popular typeface of the time." She also talked about his father and his work and showed him books his father had designed.

Carter and his mother and brother eventually returned to the house in Croydon. He remembers his father's steamer trunk appearing one day in the house's front room. In it was a type-founder's mold. His father had been stationed in Jerusalem and had worked on a typeface for Hebrew. Carter thinks that his father must have explained to him how a type mold worked, because he remembers pouring melted clay into it, when no one was around, to try and make a piece of type, and his father's displeasure.

Carter left for boarding school when he was seven. At school, he was a misfit, he says. He liked art, which no one considered important, and bebop, which the school disapproved of. His father was called to the school and told that unless his son reformed he was unlikely to amount to anything. The meeting did not have the result the school had hoped for. For one thing, Carter's father didn't know what jazz was; Carter explained it to him later, and he saw nothing to deplore. For another, he thought that the housemaster conducting the meeting had been rude. "My father was austere, but he was very principled," Carter says. Even so, one of Carter's signal memories of school was the housemaster's tell-



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ing him, "Carter, you'll never be a gentleman"—meaning a banker or a bishop or a general.

At seventeen, Carter was accepted at Oxford. Most entering students had been in the military and were older, so the school suggested that Carter, who had asthma and couldn't serve, take a year off before attending so that he wouldn't be so much younger than everyone else. His father arranged an internship for him at a printing company in the Netherlands, in Haarlem, called Enschedé en Zonen. Since the late nineteenth century, type has been made by machine, but Enschedé made type by hand, using techniques that hadn't changed for four hundred years. Carter was apprenticed to a cutter of type called P. H. Rädisch, who was eccentric and secretive. Enschedé had bought a machine to manufacture type. Each night, Rädisch removed a part from the machine and on his way home dropped it into a canal. Eventually, the machine disappeared entirely. Rädisch had for years refused to train anyone to succeed him but had lately taken on an assistant. The assistant was "willing to tolerate an amateur," Carter says. Carter sat between the two men, and though Rädisch said very little to him, the assistant was helpful. Carter was one of the last men in Europe trained to cut type by hand.

With a needle, a type cutter scratched the outline of a letter on the end of a thin shaft of steel called a punch. Then he began scraping steel away from the borders of the letter. "It's a subtracting exercise," Carter says. "You remove the steel, and the letter is what's left." The type cutter made his own tools, small and fine files and chisels and gauges. Working in steel was like carving in marble, Carter says. If he made a mistake, he lost his work. The severe penalty for an error, or for changing his mind, meant that "you thought hard before you embarked," he says. Such thinking helped him form his judgment. Carter could produce a letter every few days. Rädisch took a day to make one. Since the letter was backward, it wasn't really possible to tell by looking at it how accurate it was. The steel, filed and polished, shone slightly, which made the surface appear to be uniform even if it wasn't. A cutter could judge his work by heating the punch in the flame of a candle, which removed any oil left by his hands or moisture from the steel's being cold. Then he blew out the candle and held the punch in the smoke. When it was blackened, he moistened some paper by breathing on it and pressed the punch gently into it. The image was called a smoke proof.

Carter stayed a year at Enschedé. Seeing that he had a talent and the ability to apply it, he shed the poor opinion of himself that he'd had at school. He decided to pass on college and make some kind of life in typography. He did not expect his parents' approval, but they withheld it only briefly. His father died in 1980. He used to say only that he thought that the conversation at the dinner table might have been more interesting if Carter had chosen another field.

Most of us see a page of type as black marks against a white ground. Type designers see white space interrupted by black marks. Each letter has a boundary on either side called the side bearing. The letter "O" has the same bearing on each side, but most letters do not. The space within the letters is called the counter. The counter within the "n" must be at least in proportion to that within the "m" for the letters to look right in company. In addition, the counter of any letter must agree visually with the bearing. One means of helping settle the space between letters is a serif, the ledge of embellishment on the feet and shoulders, and sometimes halfway up the shaft, of letters in typefaces that are called serif faces. Serifs also make letters easier to read. Without serifs, "I" is difficult to distinguish from "1" or a lowercase "l." Carter says that words such as "Illinois," "Illicit," or "Illogical" written in a face without serifs can look like a picket fence.

In designing an alphabet, someone is designing a set of parts that must work in concert and in any combination. Initially, he has no idea how they will. David Berlow, a designer at the Font Bureau, in Boston, worked with Carter at Mergenthaler and was one of his partners at Bitstream, a company Carter founded with three others in 1981. "When you start a typeface, there's only a tiny part of the process that's visual," Berlow says. "You make decisions about what I am designing and why am I doing it. Matthew is notable for always making good decisions. He is very fond of saying that designing type involves a billion possibilities. Once you make your first decision—serif or sans, say—half a billion decisions remain. And when you make your second—the thickness of each character, perhaps—a quarter billion remain, and so on. Old style or new, until finally you're down to ten thousand questions. Designers often get caught between two decisions, and those decisions occur somewhere just before you draw the first 'A.' "

According to Tobias Frere-Jones, a type designer in New York at Hoefler & Frere-Jones, designers don't regard the alphabet as a linear sequence. Instead, they tend to see round letters ("O," "G," "C," "Q"), square letters ("H," "F," "L," "T"), and diagonal ones ("A," "W," "X," "Z"). The classic approach to type design is to begin with the capital "H" and "O." "Just drawing the 'H,' there are a number of choices to make," Frere-Jones says. "How substantial? How wide? Are there serifs, and, if so, how broad, how thick? When you get to the 'O,' you have to decide how heavy the heaviest part of the letter should be. There are reasons it can't be the same as the 'H.' If the heaviest part of the 'O' is the same as the heaviest part of the 'H,' the 'O' will look too thin, because the 'O' reaches its heaviest weight only for a moment, whereas the 'H' gets to hold that maximum weight all the way to the top. Also, if you draw the capital 'H' and 'O' at the same height, that 'O' will look too short, so the base of the 'O' has to fall a bit lower than the 'H,' and the top has to rise a bit higher for them to seem compatible."

Perfect geometry appears to form the basis for many typefaces, Frere-Jones says, "but in fact the eye will become confused if it sees pure geometry. The forms will seem stiff and labored." Designing type involves a kind of stagecraft—"organized cheating," Frere-Jones calls it—so that the eye will accept as symmetrical forms that are actually imperfect. "All sorts of fancy footwork goes into type design," he says, "and if it's done well you'll never know that corrections were made."

A letter that many designers try to draw soon after the "H" and the "O" is the capital "R," which has parts of all three classes of letters. Also, it is something of a showcase letter. "How the designer negotiates the 'R' can make it distinctive," Frere-Jones says. "Carter's 'R's are very robust—they're almost kind of proud. If you look at the cap 'R' in Verdana, the Microsoft face, which almost everyone has on his computer screen, I think it's a beautiful shape—the way the tail comes out quite far to the right. It's declarative."

Twenty years ago, Carter began drawing on a computer. He prefers to start with the lowercase "h" and "o." He proceeds carefully, because any mis-

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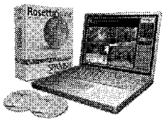

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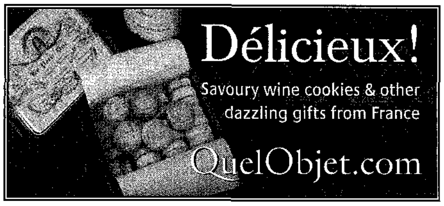
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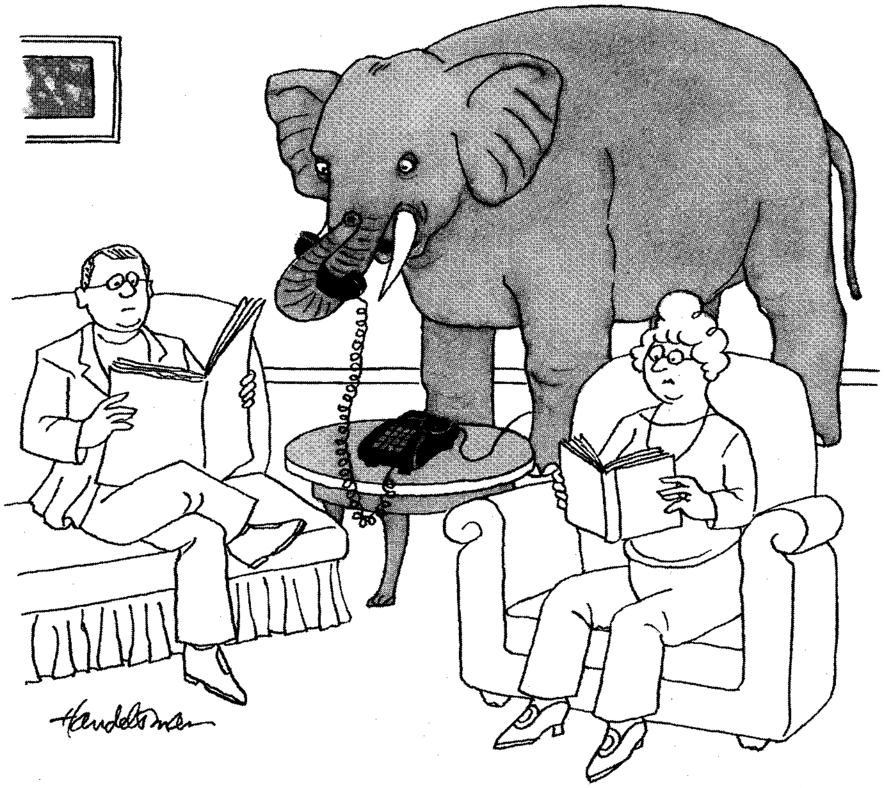

“No, this is the elephant.”

judgment multiplies its effect as he continues. He does a “p” and a “d” next, because they include elements of the “h” and the “o” and also are inversions of each other. “If something looks awful with your ‘p’ and ‘d,’” he says, “you know something’s wrong with your ‘h’ and ‘o,’ and you revise them.” Next he might draw a “v,” because it involves new considerations. “You get half a dozen letters, and you work on them again and again until you feel confident,” he says. When he has collected enough letters to feel that his decisions are sound, he begins printing proofs of them in combinations—“ab,” “ac,” “ad,” and so on.

“The heavy lifting begins when the alphabet is finished,” Carter says. “I begin then to see how the letters go together to make words, how they line up next to each other, how they sit on the page or the screen, how they work with the punctuation and the symbols. I print up forty or so pages, and when I first see them I feel suicidal. Nothing is working. If it isn’t working, I don’t necessarily know immediately why it isn’t. It simply looks bad. Then starts the long process of going back and making changes here and there. You change something one day, and the next day you change it back, because you realize that it wasn’t the problem. Nothing gets better, you despair, until one day you’re looking—you’ve changed something small—and you realize suddenly you’re looking at a typeface.”

Like architecture, typography and type design are servant arts. It is all but universally agreed that type is intended to convey ideas and should not aggressively draw attention to itself, except in advertisements or signs or trademarks—what is called display typography—or perhaps in fine printing. Avant-garde typographers whose intention, according to the designer Jonathan Hoefler, is “to do with type design what Joyce did with words and Stravinsky did with music” print texts that are meant to be difficult to read, to be deciphered like a code, but type designers tend not to be occupied by the notions that engage typographers. Type design is a practical trade, and a type designer is typically an artisan whose attention is brought to bear on solving a problem, usually leg-

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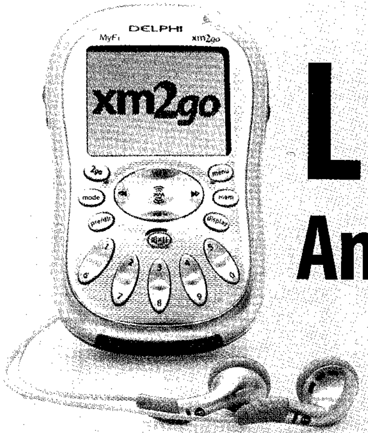
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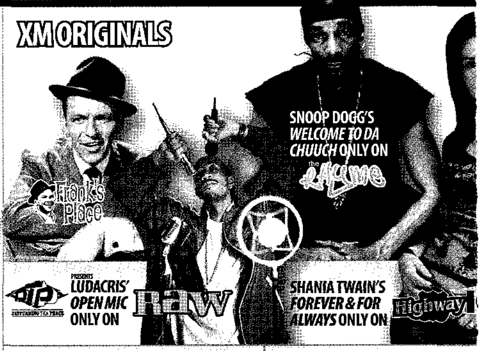
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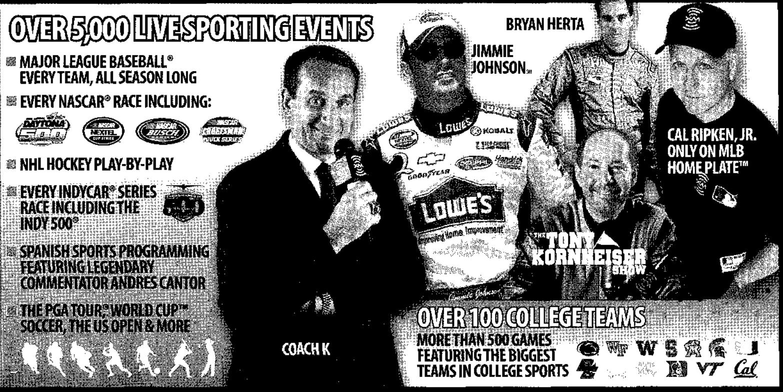

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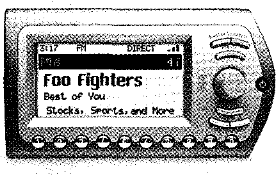

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ibility. David Berlow says that when a designer shows him a typeface that he would like him to distribute, he asks who will use it. "If there isn't an answer, I don't have an offer," Berlow says.

Type cannot help but provoke associations. The absence of serifs suggests modernity. Gothic forms suggest religion or the law. Carter doesn't care how type is used. He cares that it can be read. "People who use type—graphic designers and typographers—have ideas about the emotional content of type," he says. "All along I've had to focus on the job."

That type should be serviceable and undemonstrative was stated, nearly as a manifesto, by a critic named Beatrice Warde, in 1932. Some designers and typographers take her remarks literally and feel they no longer so rigorously apply, and some see them as flexible and essentially still pertinent. Carter falls into the second group. In "Printing Should Be Invisible," an address delivered to the British Typographers Guild, and later collected in "The Crystal Goblet," Warde said, "The book typographer has the job of erecting a window between the reader inside the room and that landscape which is the author's words." He might build a stained-glass window that is beautiful to look at, she says, but a failure as a window—that is, he might set a book in type so ornate that it becomes impenetrable. The reader's mental eye, she said, should focus "*through* type and not *upon* it."

Warde also told the Typographers Guild that the most important purpose that printing can achieve is to allow ideas to be transferred from one mind to other minds. Type used well was invisible, she said, just as the right speaking voice went unnoticed. "There is nothing simple or dull in achieving the transparent page," she said. "Vulgar ostentation is twice as easy as discipline. When you realize that ugly typography never effaces itself, you will be able to capture beauty as the wise men capture happiness by aiming at something else."

Carter does not regard himself as an artist. An artist works with private images, he says, and he works with the alphabet. As a designer, he thinks he is a little unusual in that he doesn't have a background as a calligrapher. He doesn't draw well, either. "I could never make a pen go where I wanted it to," he says. In an interview published in "Typographically Speaking: The Art of Matthew Carter," he told Margaret Re, "Although I couldn't write particularly well, what calligraphers called a 'good fist;' I could see in my mind's eye what I wanted the letter to look like, and I could perfectly understand the sequence of the pen strokes that went into making the letter. I just couldn't make the pen do it." To draw the outline of a letter by hand, he used French curves and straightedges, then colored it in.

Carter enjoys designing type for inhospitable environments. "Many of the projects that have interested me most," he says, "have involved somehow the instruction, Make a typeface that will work at tiny size when printed on newspaper at very high speed in ink composed of kerosene and lampblack—all the lowest standards of production." Before he designed Verdana for Microsoft, in 1993, the typefaces on computers were adapted from type used in magazines and books and newspapers. Because the resolution on computer screens is so imprecise, the letters looked scrawny and wan.

Microsoft wanted its new typeface to be as legible as possible. Carter was aware as he worked that the point might soon be reached where more text was read on computer screens than was read on paper, and that the purpose in designing this face was not simply that it print handsomely but that it also look good on the screen. The limitations involved did not discourage him. "If you're working on something such as a screen font, you have to get yourself into a certain frame of mind, because of the coarseness of the situation," he says. "What you're designing can never be perfect—you're not looking for a platonic ideal. You're looking at two lowercase 'e's and trying to decide which is less bad." Carter is fond of an observation made by the architect Charles Eames, who

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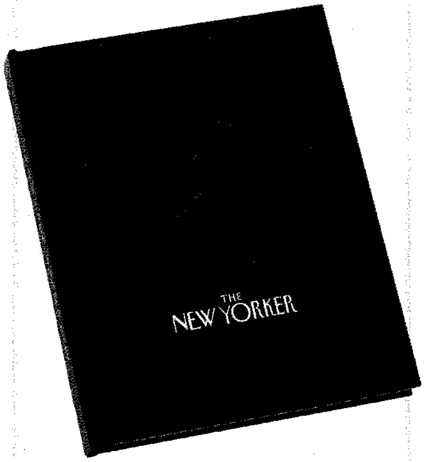

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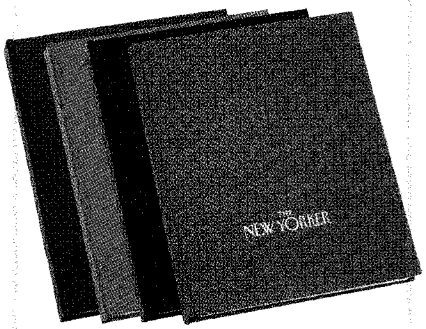

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said that he was often aware of working with constraints, but that he never made compromises.

"If you're going to make a molded chair seat, such as Eames did, there are certain forms you can't make—the plastic will break on you," Carter says. "I have a temperament that likes puzzling over problems. It's plain there are constraints here. You haven't got the fittings to make it right. When you paint a portrait, you have the brushes and the paints, and how you make the image is up to you, but if you're making a mosaic, you have a harder time to capture a likeness. If that's what you're doing, there's no point complaining you're not using oil paints."

On a computer screen, Carter would display writing set in his design, and, on another screen beside it, he'd display the same words set in Microsoft's face, MS Sans. Then he would back up slowly until he could no longer read one or the other. "It's a crude way of doing it," he says, "but it works. If you degrade it, you learn."

Verdana is a sans-serif face. Carter couldn't be sure that it would be used to make words—it might simply appear in a line of code—so he put serifs on the capital "I." "Disambiguating is what psychologists call it," he says. "Making sure that people know what they're reading." The "O" he drew nearly the same width all the way around, which is regarded as a modernist touch.

Carter does not depend on inspiration. "I don't get bolts from the blue," he says. If you gave him a blank sheet of paper on a Monday morning and asked him to design a typeface, he says, the paper would still be blank on Friday. He likes to visit cemeteries and take photographs of the lettering on gravestones. The early New England stonecutters used no font he recognizes and sometimes mixed upper- and lowercase letters. For a few years he has been working on a typeface based on their styles. The bulk of his work has involved historical typefaces—faces, that is, that have reference to earlier styles. Type designers have always been backward looking, partly for practical reasons. Experimental designs are unlikely to find a market. In addition, all of the great historical designers, seeking an ideal, devised their faces from earlier models or from inscriptional or handwritten examples.

The alphabet was organized into capital and small letters around 800. The capital letters derived from inscriptions on Roman monuments, and the smaller letters from handwriting. Initially, all printing imitated handwriting. The first book that could be easily carried around was printed in Venice in 1501. It was called a pocket book. It was printed in italic, which was thinner than the other styles of type, and was said to be an imitation of Petrarch's handwriting. Printers kept their letters in cases arranged before them on a table. Each letter had a compartment. Capital letters were kept in the upper case, and small letters in the lower case. How many copies of each a printer kept on hand depended on the work he did. Dickens used a lot of vowels. Lord Macaulay used mainly consonants. Tastes in typography have always been narrow. When John Baskerville introduced a typeface in England in 1757 which was thinner than Caslon, the dominant face of the period, people thought that it was so shocking by comparison that the strain of reading it would make them go blind.

Attitudes about type are still restrictive. "There isn't much latitude in the manipulations a designer can perform on the individual letters," Carter says. "Only so much can be done to a 'b' before it ceases to look like a 'b.' Its meaning is fixed and cannot change much. As with a piece of classical music, the score is written down—it's not tampered with—and yet each conductor interprets it differently. I'm what historians call a presentist. I know I can't look at the great French designer Garamond's work the way he did, in 1561. That would be like performing music written in the sixteenth century on the instruments it was originally played on. Even if we did that, it wouldn't sound as it did to Bach. The phrasing would be different, or the attack, or the tone. In designing a historical face, I am performing it. There is tension in the interpretation. It's how the tension is handled that defines success. I'm comfortable working with the tension that exists between the functional need for legibility and the aesthetic need to be slightly different."

Any artisan, Beatrice Warde said, must learn to resist his "natural preference…for whatever looks difficult." A Carter typeface is notable for its elegance. "There's a reservation to his style," David Berlow says. "Matthew doesn't put elaborate features on characters, to catch attention. Everything is carefully executed. This is the hardest part of type design."

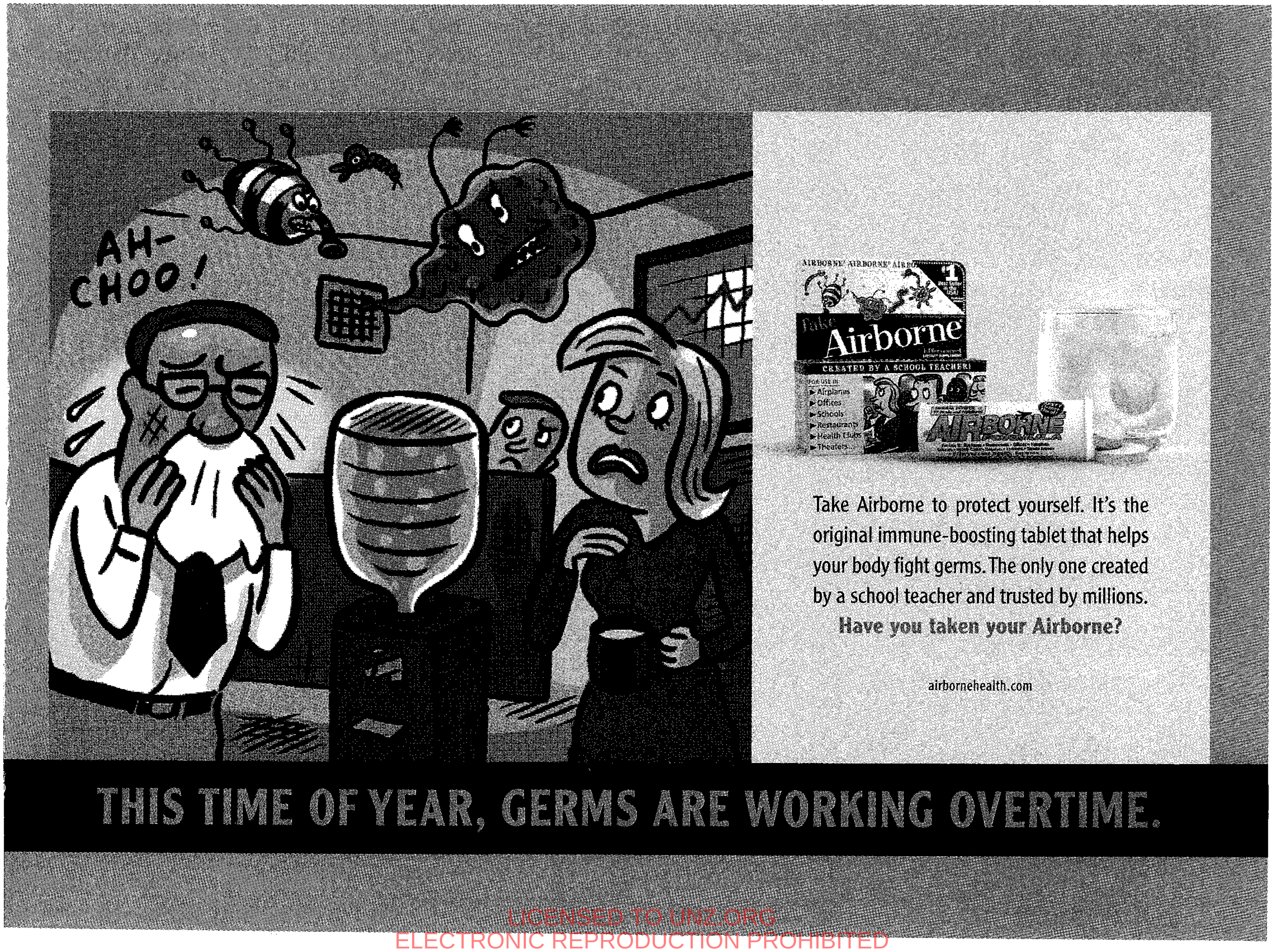
A reader is not likely to be able to identify the distinctive elements of a Carter typeface; he will only notice that it reads fluidly. "But, if you take it apart, it's fascinating to see the relationships he has created among the letters," Cyrus Highsmith, a designer at the Font Bureau, says. "Everything seems to fit. The deeper you go into the structures and the network of relationships, the more you find. And when you find something that doesn't fit, it's always there for a very interesting reason. Everything he does is deliberate and controlled but full of life."

When Carter was young, designing type was a clannish and abstruse pursuit. A young designer was expected to labor for years before he produced an acceptable alphabet. Ten years' engagement in the trade was regarded as the amount of time necessary before an aspiring designer might deliver a good lowercase "g." Or people would tell Carter, "There's only a couple of good type designers in every other generation, and we just had a few in the last one."

Computers make anyone a designer of type who wants to be one. A novice at a computer might make eighty versions of a letter in a day. Carter thinks that the ability to design letters on a computer means that more adventurous typefaces are being drawn. The difficulty for someone learning the trade on a computer, however, is telling the difference between a face that works and one that doesn't—deciding, that is, which seventy-nine letters to discard.

"I think it helps to learn in a situation where you have had fewer choices and only one chance to get it right," Carter says. "I would never tell a young designer that he had to go through this recalcitrant method, or that he would be better if he learned how to do it the way I did, but somehow you have to develop judgment. You do it by seeing your work in use. Before you have a body of work, you have to learn from others. Are the lines straight or loose? Is the 'h' too big alongside the 'o'? Or too thin? Does it look like it's going to fall over? Has the 'D' got so boxy that it looks like a 'G'? Do you like what you have or not? You have to force yourself to form an opinion. If you haven't got discernment, you simply repeat what you're used to."

Carter returned from the Netherlands in 1956. Having learned a lapsed trade, he moved in with his parents. He painted signs and did lettering work. He sought punch-cutting jobs but found hardly any. At the time,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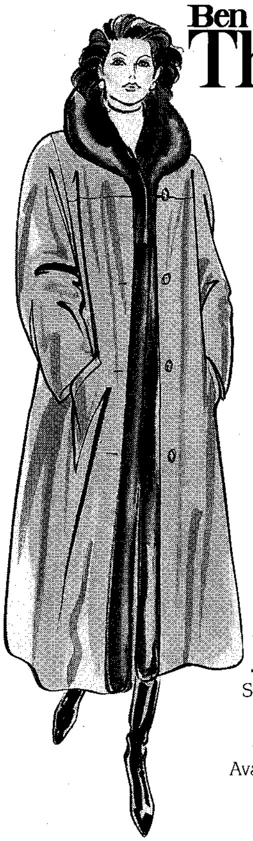

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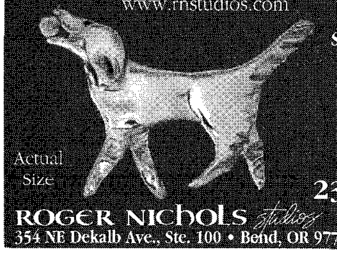

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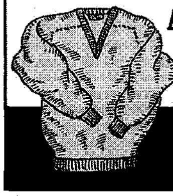

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THE KING

I went to the middle of the room and called out,
"I know you're here," then noticed him in the corner,
looking tiny in his jewelled crown and his cape
with ermine trim. "I have lost my desire to rule,"
he said. "My kingdom is empty except for you,
and all you do is ask for me." "But Your Majesty . . ."
"Don't 'Your Majesty' me," he said, and tilted his head
to one side and closed his eyes. "There," he whispered,
"that's more like it," and he entered his dream
like a mouse vanishing into its hole.

—*Mark Strand*

there may have been fewer than half a dozen punch cutters employed in Europe and America. In 1958, he moved to London, as a tenant of his aunt, and found work with a group of designers who were tired of the plainness of British type and were, Carter says, aspiring to an international style. When they saw something they liked, they asked him to draw it. Meanwhile, *The New Mechanick Exercises*, a journal concerned with typography and printing, put a photograph of Carter cutting a punch on its cover. "*Mirabile dictu*," the magazine said, "a new and extremely promising hand-punchcutter has lately emerged and set up business as an engraver of steel punches, lettering artist and typographical designer. His name is Matthew Carter."

In London, Carter was taken to lunch by one of his father's friends. "He had done well in life," Carter says, and "he summoned me and said he wanted to make an investment in my career." He asked Carter what he could do for him, and, without knowing why, exactly, Carter said that he would like to go to New York. He gave Carter three hundred pounds, and in April of 1960 Carter arrived in the city. Much of his time he spent visiting graphic-design studios. "It's hard to recall, in these days of the global village," he says, "how different design was in different places. I had grown up in a type-making privileged situation, and I'd had my year at Enschedé and my time in London, and I was cocky, but once I got to New York and saw the level of work the designers were doing—in magazines and advertising, in posters you would see around the city, at the exhibitions I attended, the entire aggregate impression—I was made abruptly and forcefully to realize that I knew nothing." He felt that he was faced with two choices: to slink home or to resolve to stay. "The cowardly part of me could have gone back to England and pretended I hadn't seen all of this design," he says. "Or I could decide, 'Wake up, Matthew, you've been living in a fool's paradise. You crossed the Atlantic and found something that knocked you sideways, now it's your move.'"

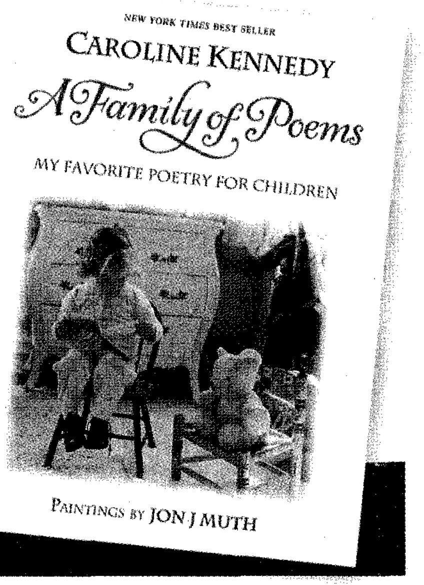
In the spring of 1960, the John Coltrane Quartet played its first engagement. Carter was in the audience. Over several weeks, he heard them three or four times. "Sometimes they played the same songs in the second set as they played in the first," he says. "Not because they were lazy but because they wanted to surpass themselves, or find something in the music that they hadn't found earlier in the evening. They were that acute." Listening to them, he decided that he owed it to himself to try and stay in New York. "Their seriousness of purpose was a lesson," he says. "Four great geniuses who would knock themselves out every night when instead they could have coasted. I felt I could have been dishonest enough to return to England and say I hadn't seen great design. But I couldn't somehow pretend that I hadn't heard the John Coltrane Quartet." As it happened, Carter couldn't find work in the city and went back to England, where he worked as a designer, but in 1965 he was hired by Mergenthaler, whose offices were in Brooklyn.

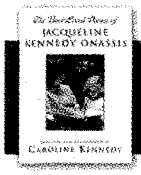
While Carter had been working at Enschedé, in the Netherlands, his father was visiting Antwerp to catalogue type for the Plantin-Moretus Museum. Plantin was one of the great printers of the sixteenth century, and 1955 was the four-hundredth anniversary of his first work. The building that had been his premises had remained in his family until the early nineteenth century, when it was given to Antwerp as a museum. To prepare a catalogue for the anniversary, the museum had engaged Carter's father. For centuries, no one had examined the archives in the museum's basement, which included boxes of antique type. While his father was in Antwerp, Carter made several visits.

"Soon as I showed up, I was put to work," he says. "We'd be in this little attic room, and someone would deliver a box from the basement, and we would scrub away at the punches, clear off several centuries of dust, then try to identify who had cut them." Carter was keenly aware of the contrast between the task he was laboring to learn and the examples he held in his hands. Plantin's account books still existed, and Carter felt his imagination stirred as he read the entries in them.

"I was eighteen," he says. "I had the run of this temple of typography, and I would sit up in the middle of the night and think about it. Opening a drawer and finding these materials, some of them known, some not, and just handling this stuff in a very informal way—the best work of the finest period of typography—there was a feeling of a presence, and the sense of being part of a continuum of typography, of being locked into a history. I'm someone without the slightest religious bent or superstition, but spending those hours after the museum closed—and so intimately with those materials—moved me."

When I asked him once how he had come to have such a feeling for type designed in the distant past, he thought for a moment, then he said, "I feel that I know the ghosts." ♦





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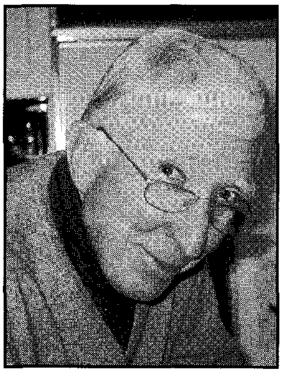

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LETTER FROM PENNSYLVANIA

DARWIN IN THE DOCK

Intelligent design has its day in court.

BY MARGARET TALBOT

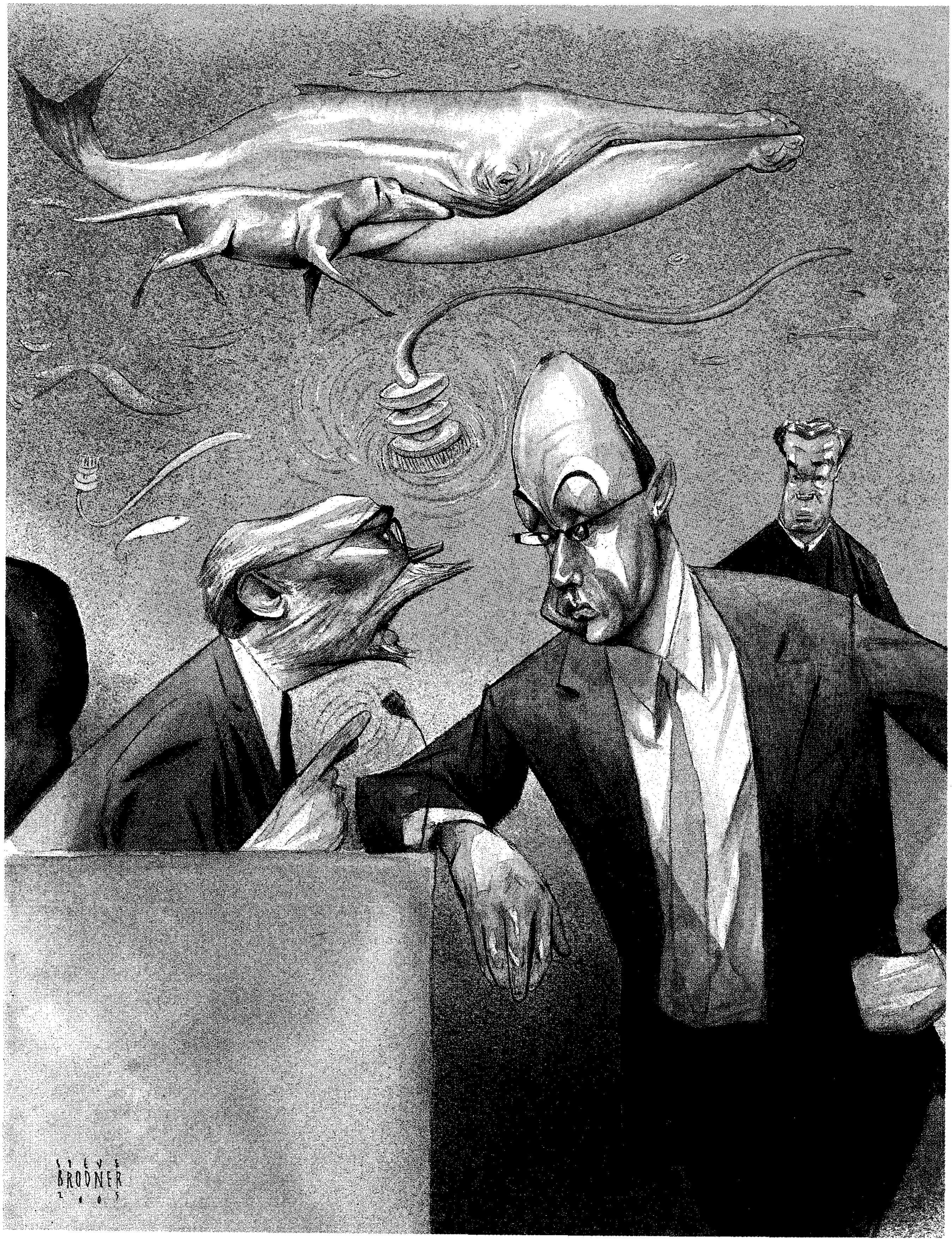
Courtroom battles about the teaching of evolution rarely have devoted much discussion to the science of evolution. This is partly because few working scientists have been willing to testify against evolutionary theory, and partly because judges have been reluctant to engage the heady question of what constitutes science. Even in the Scopes "Monkey Trial," of 1925, the judge, John Raulston, limited the issue at hand to whether John Scopes, a high-school teacher, had broken a Tennessee law against teaching "that man has descended from a lower order of animal." He refused to consider whether the law made any sense in scientific terms, and rebuffed efforts by the defense attorney, Clarence Darrow, to bring in an array of evolutionary scientists. In Epperson v. Arkansas, the landmark 1968 Supreme Court case in which a biology teacher named Susan Epperson successfully sought to overturn a state law banning the teaching of evolution, the trial in Little Rock lasted less than a day and did not include any scientific testimony. Edwards v. Aguillard, a 1987 case in which the Supreme Court struck down a statute requiring that creationism and evolution be taught side by side in public-school science classes, began in district court with a summary judgment against the Louisiana law, and thus had no testimony at all. Last spring, when the Kansas Board of Education held hearings on the teaching of evolution that were dominated by advocates of intelligent design, evolutionary scientists boycotted them, perhaps to their regret: in November, the Kansas board voted to include challenges to Darwinian theory in the state standards.

Nothing in the background of John E. Jones III—the judge who recently presided in a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, courtroom over Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District, the first case to test whether it is constitutional for public-school classes to present the argument of intelligent design—suggested that he would deviate from this pattern. Jones, who is fifty years old, was born in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. His family owns golf courses. In 1995, Tom Ridge, who was then the state's Republican governor, appointed him chairman of the state liquor-control board; in that post, he banned the sale of Bad Frog Beer, because its label shows a frog giving the finger. Yet the trial that Jones oversaw, which took place in a functional courtroom trimmed with teal and white panels, turned out to be rather like the biology class you wish you could have taken. Lawyers spent six weeks posing questions like "What is science?" and "Who was Charles Darwin?" Proponents of intelligent design—the argument that certain features of the natural world are so complex and intricately put together that they must have been deliberately fashioned—claimed that it was a bold new scientific idea that had been unfairly maligned. And scientists who believe that intelligent design is merely a repackaged version of creationism made a case for evolution that was thrilling in its breadth (evidence from homology, modern genetics, molecular biology, the fossil record) and satisfying in its detail (a recently excavated fossil of the oviraptor, a small carnivorous dinosaur of the kind that evolved into birds, depicts the creature brooding over its eggs like a hen).

The trial ended the first week of November. Jones has said that he will render his verdict by the first week in January, which is just before the ninth-grade biology students at Dover Senior High School are scheduled to start their unit on evolution. If Jones sides with the school district, the students will be read a four-paragraph statement casting doubt on the validity of Darwinian theory and touting intelligent design as an alternative. If Jones sides with the plaintiffs, he will establish the precedent that including intelligent design in a public-school curriculum represents a tacit endorsement of Christianity—thus violating the First Amendment, which states, in part, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

During the trial, which did not have a jury, Jones sometimes joked, in his appealingly growly baritone, about all the science he and everyone else in the courtroom were contending with. One morning, he deadpanned that stopping for an early lunch break would allow for a "nice, long afternoon of expert testimony." After a few hours of instruction from Kenneth Miller, a biology professor at Brown University, Jones observed that his "friends in the jury box"—the reporters—looked "like they could use a little caffeine." When a lawyer for the plaintiffs, Witold Walczak, asked Miller how he would explain to his mother the microbiology he had just been laying out, Judge Jones chimed in, "Or me!" Jones has the rugged charm of a nineteen-forties movie star; he sounded and looked like a cross between Robert Mitchum and William Holden. (According to a local paper, the Judge's wife thinks that Tom Hanks should play him—a not entirely idle bit of speculative casting, since a representative from Paramount Pictures sat through the whole trial, filing dispatches to a potential screenwriter.) Despite his jokes, however, Jones not only allowed copious expert testimony but often seemed keenly interested in it, tilting his head toward the witnesses and raising his eyebrows in mild surprise. He seemed particularly engaged when Kevin Padian, a paleontologist at Berkeley, started showing slides of prehistoric animals—which he called, variously, "critters," "guys," and "paleozoic roadkill"—in order to illustrate that we have a lot of transitional fossils demonstrating the evolution of fish to amphibians and of dinosaurs to birds. And Jones clearly enjoyed Padian's remarks

STEVE BRODNER



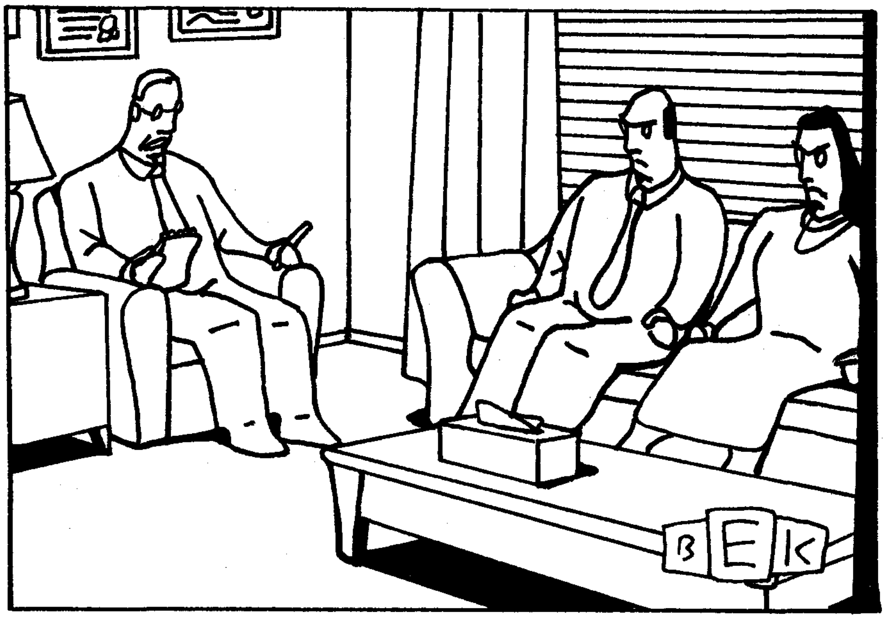
At the trial, Michael Behe, the leading intellectual of intelligent design, was cross-examined with cheerful mercilessness by Eric Rothschild. For six weeks, the courtroom of Judge John E. Jones III was like the biology class you wished you could have taken.

on the educational value of dissecting your Kentucky Fried Chicken (the pointy part of the wing shows where the individual digits of the dinosaur fused together in birds).

You sometimes hear it said that a courtroom is not a proper venue for debating science. In this case, it proved to be an ideal forum. For one thing, it allowed for the close questioning of Michael Behe, the Lehigh University biochemist who is the leading intellectual of intelligent design (and one of the movement's few working scientists). Under cross-examination by Eric Rothschild, a dogged lawyer for the plaintiffs, Behe conceded, for example, that a definition of science that could be expanded to embrace intelligent design could, by the same token, embrace astrology. And he was unable to name any peer-reviewed research generated by intelligent design, though the movement has been around for more than a decade.

The trial also allowed the lawyers to act as proxies for the rest of us, and ask of scientists questions that we'd probably be too embarrassed to ask ourselves. In a courtroom, you must lay an intellectual foundation in order to earn a line of questioning—and so the lawyers stripped matters neatly back to the first principles of science. Considering how often it is said that evolution is "just" a theory, for instance, it is clear that many people either do not know or do not accept the scientific definition of a theory. The lawyers for the pro-evolution side went to great lengths to make the point that, although all science is provisional, a scientific theory is a powerful explanation that unites a large body of facts and relies on testable hypotheses. As Padian testified, it is not "something that we think of in the middle of the night after too much coffee and not enough sleep."

Intelligent design is an argument by inference. If we walk down the beach and see the words "John loves Mary" in the sand—an example offered by the intelligent-design textbook "Of Pandas and People"—we can infer that someone wrote them. We can make a similar inference, the textbook claims, when we look at the inner workings of some of nature's niftier products. In intelligent design's precursor forms—the nineteenth-century arguments of the Reverend William Paley, for instance, who rhapsodized about the mechanics of the human eye—the implied author is clearly God. The modern version of intelligent design, however, declines to specify who the master designer might be. Behe and other advocates will freely admit that, for them, the designer of life on earth is the God of Christianity. (Intelligent design, Behe has written, is "less plausible to those for whom the existence of God is in question, and is much less plausible for those who deny God's existence.") But, conceivably, the intelligent designer could be space aliens or a time traveller from the future. It's hard to believe that any proponents of the idea actually believe this.



"You're both miserable wretches, but I suppose that's beside the point."

The example that proponents of intelligent design dote upon is the bacterial flagellum, the outboard-motor-like apparatus that propels some bacteria. This tiny wonder isn't just machine-like, they argue; it *is* a machine, something that could never have been produced by random mutation and natural selection, no matter how many billions of years you gave it. (Behe has claimed that all its parts would need to be present and working at once for it to function.) During the trial, the flagellum was invoked dozens of times. The cumulative effect of all these return engagements was the opposite of the one intended, however: it began to seem as if the intelligent-design movement had hitched its wagon to one very tiny star—that on the side of evolution you had a vast accumulation of evidence from sundry disciplines, and on the other side you had . . . an extracellular appendage. To be fair, Behe cited a few other examples of "irreducible complexity," like the blood-clotting mechanism. But when one of the lawyers for Behe's side joked that "we could probably call this the Bacterial Flagellum Trial," he was hitting a little too close to home. Indeed, on the penultimate day of the trial, when Scott Minnich, a professor of microbiology at the University of Idaho who was testifying for the intelligent-design side, showed a slide of the bacterial flagellum, Judge Jones offered the dry understatement "We've seen that." Minnich, who up until then had struck a staid, even sombre tone, acknowledged the sentiment: "I kind of feel like Zsa Zsa Gabor's fifth husband. As the old adage goes, I know what to do, but I just can't make it exciting."

Behe's testimony went on for three days—longer than that of any other witness. He certainly looked professorial, with his graying beard and oversized glasses. And he seemed authoritative when he discussed the recondite structures of microorganisms. But under cross-examination Behe sometimes sounded evasive and circumlocutious; he seemed to have trouble hearing challenging questions, and would put his hand to his ear and ask the lawyer to repeat them.

Eric Rothschild kept at him with

cheerful mercilessness. "Let's start with the bacterial flagellum," he said at one point. "You've made a point about how complicated and intricate it is?" Behe nodded. Rothschild went on, in a deceptively reassuring gee-whiz tone: "And it really is! I mean, it looks remarkable. But a *lot* of biological life is pretty remarkable."

Behe saw what he was up to. "That makes me very suspicious," he said.

"You're suspicious about how remarkable biological life is?" Rothschild asked incredulously. Then he marched Behe through a list of biological marvels, whose marvellousness Behe duly acknowledged: photosynthesis; the stars and planets; flowers. Rothschild's point was that arguments expressing astonishment at nature's complexities are obvious and infinitely extendable—why limit yourself to the bacterial flagellum?—and generally considered insufficient as science, however pleasing they might be from a philosophical or aesthetic perspective. When Rothschild added "the entire human body" to his list, saying, "Now, *that's* an amazing biological structure," Behe gazed upward dreamily and joked, "I'm thinking of examples."

"Hopefully, not mine!" Rothschild responded.

"Rest assured," came the reply.

Rothschild then asked Behe how, exactly, the designer executed his handiwork. Behe declined to speculate, but Rothschild pressed him for specifics, just skirting absurdity. Was the designer limited to making "the blueprint"? ("Well, no, the designer would also have to somehow cause the plan to, you know, go into effect," Behe replied.) Did the designer make each and every protein in the flagellum? (That was a difficult question to address and would require "lots and lots of distinctions to be made.") Did the designer fashion every individual flagellum or just "the first lucky one"? And so on.

In his writings, Behe has noted that his claim that the bacterial flagellum could not have emerged through evolution is open to rebuttal: "To falsify such a claim, a scientist could go into the laboratory, place a bacterial species lacking a flagellum under some selective pressure (for mobility, say), grow it for ten thousand generations, and see if a flagellum—or any equally complex system—was produced." Rothschild asked Behe if he had attempted such an experiment. No, Behe said, with a weary smile; he doubted it would be fruitful, and he preferred to spend his time on other things.

Even if such an experiment were performed and failed to give rise to a bacterial flagellum, Rothschild suggested to Behe, it would hardly be dispositive. "It's entirely possible that something that couldn't be produced in the lab in two years or a hundred years, or even in a laboratory that was in operation for all of human existence, *could* be produced over three and a half billion years," he said. Behe conceded the point. And that, Rothschild concluded, is precisely why the age of the earth is crucial to any biological theory about the origins and development of life. And yet, Rothschild observed, "it doesn't matter to intelligent design" whether the earth is "billions of years old or ten thousand years old."

"Intelligent design is not a *person*," Behe retorted. "So it doesn't have feelings like you are describing."

For the vast majority of scientists, the argument against intelligent design starts with the notion that science is bound by methodological naturalism—it looks for natural explanations for natural phenomena, and has nothing to say about the supernatural. This was the foundation the plaintiffs' lawyers had to lay, and they had an ideal craftsman in Kenneth Miller, the Brown biology professor. Miller is the co-author of a best-selling series of high-school and college biology textbooks; students who lug the books around in their backpacks typically refer to them by their cover photographs—the "dragonfly book," the "lion book," and the "elephant book." He is also one of the few prominent scientists willing to debate creation scientists and intelligent-design advocates. (Many mainstream scientists don't want to be bothered to debate something they find as uncontroversial as the theory of evolution. Miller has been doing it for years, aided, perhaps, by his experience as an umpire for N.C.A.A. softball. In that capacity, a recent article on Miller reported, he has had "every foul word in the book hurled at him, and some dirt, too.") He is also a practicing Catholic, and therefore embodies the notion that religion and science are, as Stephen Jay Gould once called them, "non-overlapping magisteria." Miller, who is slim and has a neatly trimmed salt-and-pepper beard, addressed counsel on both sides as "sir," made delicate scholarly jokes that weren't too geeky, and answered each question with undiminished energy, as though he'd heard it before, but not that day, so, really, it was as fresh and interesting as ever. He has a firm voice and a forthright way of putting things: after noting that 99.9 per cent of the organisms that have ever lived on earth are now extinct, for instance, he said that "an intelligent designer who designed things, 99.9 per cent of which didn't last, certainly wouldn't be very intelligent."

Under direct examination by Walczak, one of the plaintiffs' lawyers, Miller described the tenets of science: practitioners seek their explanations in what can be observed, tested, and replicated by others.

"These rules don't apply just in the United States?" Walczak asked.

"No, sir, they don't," Miller said. "I think science might be the closest thing we have on this planet to a universal culture."

"Why are these rules important?" Walczak said.

"If you don't have these rules, you don't have science," Miller explained. "If you invoke a nonnatural cause—a spirit force or something like that—in your research and I decide to test it, I have no way to test it. I can't order it from a biological-supply house. I can't grow it in my laboratory."

"So supernatural causation is not considered part of science?" Walczak asked.

"I hesitate to beg the patience of the court with this, but, being a Boston Red Sox fan, I can't resist," Miller said. "One might say, for example, the reason the Boston Red Sox were able to come back from three games down against the New York Yankees was because God was tired of George Steinbrenner and wanted to see the Red Sox win. In my part of the country, you'd be surprised how many people think that's a perfectly reasonable explanation for what happened last year. And you know what? It might be true. But it certainly is not science . . . and it's certainly not something we can test." Judge Jones, who did not interrupt this exchange, appeared to be suppressing a smile.

In the fall of 2003, the assistant superintendent of the Dover Area School District, a pleasant but persistent fellow named Mike Baksa, began making frequent visits to Dover High when the science teachers were having lunch. Bryan Rehm, who taught physics and environmental science at the time, recalled Baksa's talking to them about "biology, biology, biology"—in particular, about the board's concerns with the evolution unit. Bertha Spahr, a chemistry teacher who has taught at Dover for forty-one years, had heard from Baksa before. At the trial, she testified that he wanted to give her "a heads-up that there is a member of the school board who is interested in having creationism share equal time with evolution." The school-board official was Alan Bonsell, a conservative Christian who owns a radiator-and-auto-repair shop.

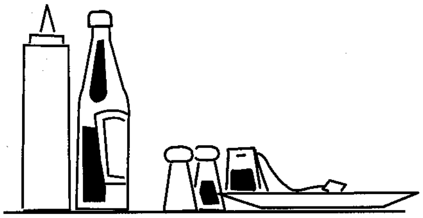
Spahr has short brown curls, an alert, birdlike manner, and, it seems, a strong aversion to what she considers nonsense. Her fellow-teachers call her Bert. "In Bert's class, it's her way or no way," her younger colleague Jen Miller told me. "But I can't tell you how many kids she's taught who have gone into chemistry or science because of her." On the stand, wearing a black pants suit with an austere gold pin, and replying precisely and astringently to cross-examination, Spahr recalled her annoyance with another member of the school board, Bill Buckingham, this way:

> SPAHR: He had asked more than once if we teach man comes from a monkey. In response to that, in utter frustration, I looked at Mr. Buckingham and I said, "If you say man and monkey one more time in the same sentence, I'm going to scream." He did not do that, and I didn't have to.
>
> QUESTION: And that's because you're Italian, Mrs. Spahr, is that right?
>
> SPAHR: *Sicilian.*

It was in 2002, Spahr testified, that she first sensed a new and censorious attitude toward evolution in Dover, a town of nineteen thousand people in a largely rural corner of York County. That August, she learned that a janitor had removed and burned a student's classroom mural depicting the ascent of man—hominid ancestors evolving into modern humans. She testified that when she complained to the school superintendent, Richard Nilsen, she was told to mind her own business.

At the trial, Rehm said that he and his colleagues kept telling Baksa, "We're not going to balance evolution with creationism. It's an inappropriate request. . . . There's no educational purpose for it." Yet "the next day or two days later," he said wonderingly, Baksa would be "back at lunch again with the same questions and the same concerns." Eventually, school-board members started passing on to the teachers, via Baksa, various materials, among them a video called "Icons of Evolution," a critique of Darwin based on a book that has been roundly dismissed by mainstream scientists, and a list of biology textbooks used by Christian schools. Jen Miller, a Dover biology teacher for thirteen years, testified that Bill Buckingham complained to her about a note in the teachers' edition of the biology textbook suggesting that students discuss what adaptations humans might undergo if they were sent to other planets. Buckingham didn't like the idea, Miller said, because "if we were asking students to do that, it showed man evolved and that kind of thing."

Miller started reconsidering lesson plans that had worked well for her in the past. She had been fond of a time-line exercise in which she took her students into the hall and laid a long thin strip of tape on the floor; everybody helped write in dates for the origins of the earth and of various species. The exercise made explicit the standard scientific theory about the age of the earth: four and a half billion years, as opposed to the six to ten thousand years generally proposed by creationists. Miller, who found the relentless push and pull with the board stressful, dropped the time line. "I had never experienced anything like this before," she told me. "Up till then, I had always been very comfortable in my own classroom."



Robert Linker, an amiable and generally relaxed young biology teacher, who was also the school's wrestling coach, was getting nervous, too. Typically, he had started off the evolution unit by drawing a line on the blackboard. On one side he'd write "Evolution" and on the other side "Creationism." Evolution was based on the fossil and DNA record, and creationism was based on the Bible. Evolution, he'd say, is what we discuss in this class. Creationism was something to take up elsewhere—at home or in church. Feeling pressure from the school board, he stopped doing that. "I just felt there was some controversy, because I had to go to two meetings and, for the first time, tell how I taught a particular subject," Linker testified. "I didn't know if I was really doing something wrong with writing that 'creationism' word on the board."

By June, 2003, what had been unfolding as a behind-the-scenes struggle at Dover High was becoming public. At a June 7th meeting, the school board discussed adopting a new biology textbook, and Buckingham complained that the book—co-authored by Kenneth Miller—was "laced with Darwinism." Max Pell, a former Dover High student and current Penn State student, stood up to protest; according to several witnesses, Buckingham asked him if he'd ever heard of brainwashing, and suggested that it was happening at places like Penn State, which taught evolution over and over until it was accepted as fact. At a June 14th meeting, which was attended by a hundred Dover residents, the two local newspapers reported that Buckingham said, "Two thousand years ago, someone died on a cross. Can't someone take a stand for Him?" After the meeting, he told a reporter, "This country wasn't founded on Muslim beliefs or evolution. This country was founded on Christianity, and our students should be taught as such." On the stand, Buckingham admitted that he had made those statements, but claimed that he had made them at an earlier board meeting. A number of witnesses recalled his making both statements. And virtually everyone who spoke at the trial about that June meeting recalled that during public comment Buckingham's wife, Charlotte, had delivered a long and emotional speech in which she quoted Scripture and declared evolution to be incompatible with the Bible. Some people recalled her asking how Dover could teach anything but creationism.

This summer, Buckingham quit the school board and moved to North Carolina, several months after announcing that he was in rehab for an addiction to the painkiller OxyContin. On the stand in Harrisburg, Buckingham, who wore a tan blazer with a pin of an American flag within a cross, was subdued, at times to the point of inaudibility. He insisted that he had wanted intelligent design, not creationism, to be taught in the Dover schools. He and two other board members, Alan Bonsell and Sheila Harkins, all testified that they simply wanted students to be aware of flaws in the Darwinian model; even if they themselves knew little or nothing about intelligent design—on the stand, Harkins acknowledged that she didn't have a definition of intelligent design in mind when she voted for it, adding, "I still don't today"—they thought that awareness of the argument would foster critical thinking. Buckingham said, "I didn't want the students to hear just [about evolution] because they would accept it as fact when there is another viable scientific theory out there called intelligent design. I wanted them to have more of a well-rounded education."

At one point, under cross-examination, Buckingham staunchly maintained that no board member had ever spoken in public, or to another board member, about creationism. This was an awkward moment, since two witnesses—one for the defense and one for the plaintiffs—had already testified that the board's president, Alan Bonsell, had mentioned creationism and school prayer at a board retreat. It became more awkward still when a lawyer for the plaintiffs showed a video clip from the local FOX affiliate, in which Buckingham, who was being interviewed, clearly says, "It's O.K. to teach Darwin, but you have to balance it with something else, such as creationism." Buckingham claimed that this comment had been accidental: he had been "like a deer in the headlights," trying so hard not to say the word "creationism" that he couldn't help but blurt it out. A Freudian slip? the plaintiffs' lawyer Steven Harvey asked him. No, Buckingham replied: a "human one."

"Let's try to think of something that untold millions of people will buy."

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In the end, it wasn't very hard for the plaintiffs to make the case that several of the school-board members had been eager to see creationism added to the curriculum and, after discovering that the idea was legally problematic, had latched on to the term "intelligent design." For example, in June, 2004, a board member named Heather Geesey sent a letter to one of the local papers, in which she argued, "Our country was founded on Christian beliefs and principles. We are not looking for a book that is teaching students that this is a wrong thing or a right thing. It is just a fact. All we are trying to accomplish with this task is to choose a biology book that teaches the most prevalent theories. The definition of 'theory' is merely a speculation or an ideal circumstance. To present only one theory or to give one option would be directly contradicting our mission statement. You can teach creationism without it being Christianity. It can be presented as a higher power."

On October 4, 2004, Alan Bonsell announced at a school-board meeting that the district had received an "anonymous" donation of sixty copies of the textbook "Of Pandas and People," by Percival Davis and Dean H. Kenyon. (A typical paragraph reads, "Intelligent design means that various forms of life began abruptly through an intelligent agency, with their distinctive features already intact—fish with fins and scales, birds with feathers, beaks, and wings, etc.") Bonsell later admitted, in a deposition, that the donor was his father.

At the trial, Bill Buckingham revealed that he had been involved in the acquisition of the textbooks. He testified that he had stood up in front of his church one Sunday and said that there was "a need" for money to purchase copies of "Pandas." ("I said, 'If you want to give money, fine. I'm not asking for any, I'm not telling you to give any, it's up to you,'" he recalled on the stand.) The congregation donated eight hundred and fifty dollars, which Buckingham gave to Bonsell, who handed it over to his father. In his deposition, Bonsell had not been forthcoming about where the money came from—nor was he candid about the matter at another board meeting, when he was asked

"We should probably think about heading back to the city."

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who the donor was. (By the end of the trial, counsel for the plaintiffs had said "That's not what you said in your deposition" so many times that one of them finally made a joke out of it. When Eric Rothschild asked Mike Baksa whether something had caused his "antennae" to go up, Baksa joked that he didn't have antennae. "That's *not* what you told me at your deposition," Rothschild intoned portentously.)

On October 18th, the school board voted to make students "aware of gaps/problems in Darwin's theory and of other theories of evolution, including, but not limited to, intelligent design." Teachers of ninth-grade biology would have to read their students the following statement:

> The Pennsylvania Academic Standards require students to learn about Darwin's Theory of Evolution and eventually to take a standardized test of which evolution is a part.
>
> Because Darwin's Theory is a theory, it continues to be tested as new evidence is discovered. The Theory is not a fact. Gaps in the theory exist for which there is not evidence. A theory is defined as a well-tested explanation that unifies a broad range of observations.
>
> Intelligent Design is an explanation of the origins of life that differs from Darwin's view. The reference book "Of Pandas and People" is available in the library along with other resources for students who might be interested in gaining an understanding of what Intelligent Design actually involves.
>
> With respect to any theory, students are required to keep an open mind. The school leaves the discussion of the Origins of Life to individual students and their families. As a Standards-driven district, class instruction focusses upon preparing students to achieve proficiency on Standards-based assessments.

It was, as its defenders like to point out, a one-minute statement. Plenty of students would just tune it out. It was also a statement that, as its detractors argued, was singular in the high-school curriculum. Evolution was the only scientific theory that the Dover school district was expressing any reluctance about teaching. Of all the scientific theories that the students would learn about in ninth-grade biology, only this one was declared to be riddled with "gaps"—gaps for which, confusingly, there was "not evidence."

Over the next several months, four board members—including Angie Yingling, who had initially voted with the majority, then reversed her position—announced their resignations, claiming that Buckingham and his supporters were accusing them of atheism or a lack of patriotism. Yingling said at the time that she saw a religious agenda "spiralling out of control."

In a tense exchange with the school board, the teachers at Dover High had tried to modify the language of the disclaimer that was to be read to students. They liked a sentence that Mike Baksa, the perennial middleman, had written into the draft of the statement: "Darwin's theory of evolution continues to be the dominant scientific explanation of the origin of the species." They also supported including the word "yet" before the word "evidence" in the sentence "Gaps in the theory exist for which there is not evidence." The board declined to adopt these compromises. Students would be allowed to leave the classroom when the statement was read, but the teachers considered that an inadequate solution. And they worried about their legal liability in introducing to the classroom a subject that they considered "too close to creationism to be comfortable," as Jen Miller put it. (This was a concern that Bert Spahr had publicly expressed at one of the school-board meetings, prompting Buckingham to demand to know where she had obtained her law degree.) The teachers did not accept the district's argument that reading a statement, or "making students aware" of intelligent design, was not the same as teaching it. They believed that everything they did in front of a classroom was teaching—that students picked up signals even from what clothes the teachers wore or the TV show they mentioned having watched the night before.

The Dover biology teachers refused to read the statement. In a letter to the board, they argued that "central to the teaching act and our ethical obligation is the solemn responsibility to teach the truth." Each of them believed "that if I as the classroom teacher read the required statement, my students will inevitably and understandably believe that intelligent design is a valid scientific theory, perhaps on par with the theory of evolution. That is not true. To refer the students to 'Of Pandas and People,' as if it were a scientific resource, breaches my ethical obligation to provide them with scientific knowledge that is supported by recognized scientific proof or theory." Last January, Richard Nilsen, the superintendent, and Mike Baksa read the intelligent-design statement to ninth-grade biology classes at Dover High.

The night after the board approved the evolution disclaimer, Brad Neal, a social-studies teacher at the high school, had an e-mail exchange with Baksa. "In light of last night's apparent change from a 'standards-driven' school district to the 'living-word-driven' school district . . . I would like some direction in how to adapt our judicial-branch unit," Neal wrote. "It is apparent that the Supreme Court of the United States has it all wrong. Is there some supplemental text that we can use to set our students straight as to the 'real' law of the land? We will be entering this unit within the next month and are concerned that we would be polluting our students' minds if we continue to use our curriculum as currently written in accordance with [state] standards."

Neal's message was sarcastic, but Baksa's reply was not. "Brad, all kidding aside, be careful what you ask for," he wrote back. "I've been given a copy of 'The Myth of Separation,' by David Barton, to review from board members. Social studies curriculum is next year. Feel free to borrow my copy to get an idea where the board is coming from."

In December, 2004, eleven parents brought suit against the Dover Area School District. They were represented by lawyers from the A.C.L.U., Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and Pepper Hamilton, a high-end law firm with an office in Philadelphia. The Dover Area School District was represented by attorneys from the Thomas More Law Center, which is based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and was co-founded by Thomas Monaghan, the multimillionaire who started Domino's Pizza. The law center calls itself the "sword and shield for people of faith"; it has defended various pro-life groups, including an organization that created a Web site listing the names and addresses of abortion providers under the heading "Nuremberg Files." The law center's Web site invites users to order various free items, including book covers featuring the Ten Commandments. ("Make sure the Ten Commandments are found in your public school!")

The center's chief lawyer is Richard Thompson, a voluble silver-haired fellow with the prominent features and sallow complexion of the subject of a Renaissance portrait. As the chief prosecutor of Oakland County, Michigan, for most of the nineteen-nineties, Thompson made it a personal mission to prosecute Jack Kevorkian. (He failed several times to convict him.) At the Harrisburg trial, most of the questioning was handled not by Thompson but by two other lawyers affiliated with the center: Patrick Gillen, who was bespectacled and courteous and spoke in a voice that got steadily softer and hoarser as the trial went on; and Robert Muise, a handsome young man with neatly parted hair and nine homeschooled daughters, who posed questions in an unnerving monotone. Outside the courtroom, however, Thompson blasted the separation of church and state; he said that he "intuitively" did not believe in the common descent of man and animals; and he joked that he certainly couldn't trace his own family back to an ape. When a British documentary filmmaker called out, "Does America have a love-hate relationship with God?," Thompson happily called back, "America has a *love* relationship with God! If you look at poll after poll, the vast majority of Americans believe in God; the vast majority of Americans are Christian."

The people of Dover were divided over the trial. Tucked between Bald Hill and Conewago Creek, Dover is geographically isolated and overwhelmingly white. But it is a more complex place than it might appear from the outside: "It has layers," as Rob McIlvaine, a longtime resident, told me. At the diner on Route 74, where I stopped for a milkshake one night, a rack of books for sale featured Christian marriage manuals and Tim LaHaye novels. At a revival meeting at the Mt. Royal Full Gospel Church, I saw a woman, white hair coiled atop her head, speak in tongues and recall an episode when God had dangled her over Hell. At the same time, many of the town's residents shared Kenneth Miller's definition of science and the Supreme Court's current understanding of the separation of church and state.

The two sides sometimes clashed in ways that were almost funny. Bernadette Reinking, a retired nurse, campaigned this fall to be elected to the Dover school board, on a slate that opposed the curriculum change. While going door to door one evening, she encountered "an older gentleman who started doing this monkey dance." She told me, "He was going, you know, 'Ooh-ooh, aah-aah!,' jumping up and down, scratching, the whole bit. I said, 'Sir, please stop! I'm a nurse.' I was concerned he was going to have a heart attack, for goodness sake."

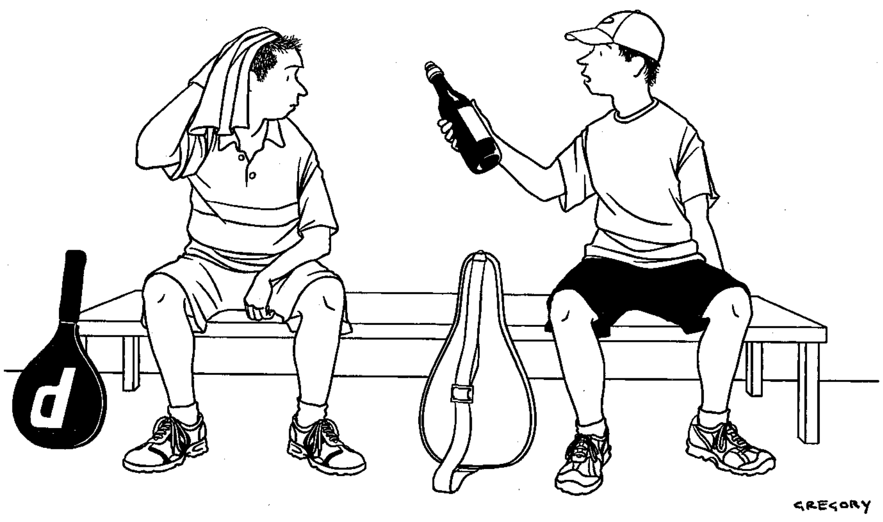
Sociologically, neither side was notably different from the other. Bonsell has his repair shop; Buckingham is a former prison supervisor; Harkins is a homemaker who sells real estate in her spare time. Of the three, only Bonsell has a college degree. The plaintiffs had four teachers in their ranks, but the lead plaintiff was Tammy Kitzmiller, a high-school graduate who works as the office manager at a landscaping company. (One of her two daughters, Jessica, had walked out of biology class when the disclaimer was read.) On the stand, another plaintiff, Cynthia Sneath, described her educational background as follows: "graduated high school; diploma; life lessons; hopefully, a dose of common sense." She and her husband run a small business repairing and installing appliances, and have two sons, ages four and eight.

Sneath is thirty-seven, wears her hair in a spiky, shoulder-length shag, and favors jeans and denim shirts. It will be years before her children attend Dover High, but Sneath was concerned about any downgrading of evolution in the biology curriculum—she distrusted the motives for the change, and she was protective of her older son Griffin's interest in science. She testified, "You know, don't get him started on talking about the NASA space-shuttle program—I mean, just everything he does is very science-oriented." As a parent, Sneath said, you want to be "proactive in your child's education," but "obviously, I'm not an educator. I have no big degrees." She said that she depended "on the school district to provide the fundamentals, and I consider evolution to be a fundamental of science." Besides, Sneath added, "the word 'designer' is a synonym for 'creator,' and, you know, that takes a leap of faith for me." It was her "privilege," she said, to guide her children "in matters of faith"—it wasn't the job of "a science teacher," "an administrator," or "the Dover Area school board."

You couldn't really say that the divide in Dover was between old-timers and newcomers—both sides included people whose families had lived in town for generations—or between religious and secular people. Bryan Rehm, one of the plaintiffs, belongs to the United Church of Christ; he and his wife, Christy, run a vacation Bible school. Julie Smith, a medical technician who was another plaintiff, said that what had bothered her most about the curriculum change was that it had fanned religious tension within her own family. She is an observant Catholic, but her teen-age daughter came home one day after a discussion with friends at Dover High, and announced, "Mom, evolution is a lie. What kind of a Christian are you?" On the other side, Bill Buckingham, the former prison supervisor on the school board, belonged to one of Dover's most conservative evangelical churches, and Alan Bonsell believes in a literal reading of Genesis. But Sheila Harkins is a Quaker.

Even the political divisions didn't track precisely. Steven Stough, a registered Republican who is a middle-school teacher and track coach, was one of the first parents to call the A.C.L.U. hot line in Philadelphia. At election time this year, the school-board candidates who pledged to keep intelligent design in the curriculum ran on a Republican ticket, but the opposing slate was made up of four Republicans and four Democrats.

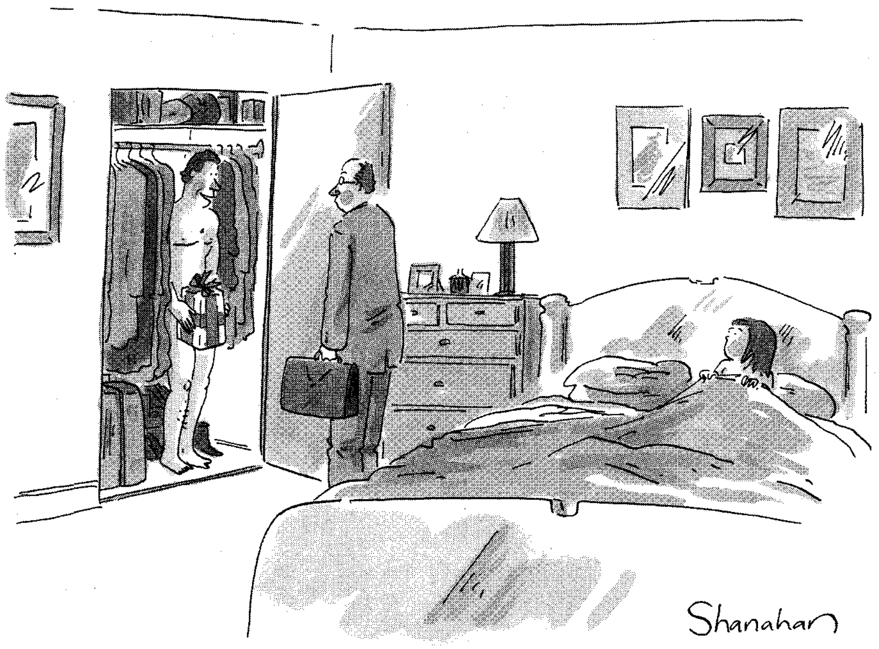
In some ways, the clearest line of demarcation was between those who avidly read the local newspapers (virtually all the plaintiffs) and those who scorned them (virtually all the pro-intelligent-design school-board members). Unusually for a small American city these days, York, Pennsylvania, which is eight miles from Dover, has two vigorous newspapers: a morning paper called the York *Daily Record* and an afternoon paper called the York *Dispatch*. (Dover itself does not have a newspaper.) Most of the plaintiffs in this case first learned of the plans of the Dover school board from reading the York papers, which have covered the controversy closely.



"Care for some sports wine?"

Long before the intelligent-design crisis, there were clearly people in Dover who relished the York papers and others who despised them. The plaintiff Steven Stough, for instance, described it as "his sickness" that he read both papers, even while on vacation. (He read them online.) Yet Bill Buckingham, the school-board member, remarked on the stand that he no longer read about the school district in either paper: "I don't believe a darn thing they print," he said. You could argue that this was because the papers were biased, but the York *Daily Record* had a *Wall Street Journal*-like divide between its front section and its editorial page. The paper included tough analytical reporting on the trial and a column by Mike Argento, a York native—who launched a mock campaign to "get the Dover Area schools to teach the theory that cows think in Spanish," given that the notion "clearly meets the strict criteria set by the Dover schools for what can get into the curriculum"—but its opinion pages were sympathetic to the school board. A recent essay argued, "Their witnesses insist that Darwinism is pure fact, that it is neutral in regard to religion. Then they roll out the old chestnut that science and religion are two entirely different realms of knowledge—separate but equal. We've heard that before."

John Scopes lost his case. It's easy to forget this, because most of us get our sense of the trial from the stirring movie version of the play "Inherit the Wind," in which fundamentalism is decisively routed by Spencer Tracy. Moreover, even though Clarence Darrow failed to win over the judge, his cross-examination of his opposing counsel, William Jennings Bryan—the aging populist politician and champion of creationism—is an indelible moment in legal history. Edward Larson, the leading historian of the Scopes trial, writes, "Through Bryan's testimony, Darrow sought to show that



"Hi—I'm your secret Santa."

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certain passages of the Bible, like the account of creation, cannot logically be accepted as literally true. Bryan fell for this scheme, by admitting under close questioning that, despite his expertise, he had no notion about how Joshua lengthened the day by making the sun (rather than the Earth) stand still," or "where Cain got his wife." Still, if Darrow succeeded in humiliating Bryan—who died five days after the trial—he did not persuade the court that Scopes's case was about intellectual freedom.

For three decades after the Scopes trial, the teaching of evolution was not subject to legal challenge from creationists. It wasn't necessary: textbook publishers, conscious of the sensitivities of fundamentalist Christians, had nearly eliminated Darwin and his theory from biology textbooks. And this effort was rewarded: the less a textbook mentioned Darwin, the more it sold. As Larson points out in his book "Trial and Error: The American Controversy Over Creation and Evolution," a typical adaptation was undergone by a popular textbook called "Biology for Beginners," by Truman Moon:

> Moon published new editions of his popular text about every five years from 1921 to 1963. Moon's initial text carried a picture of Darwin as the frontispiece, opened with the affirmation that biology was "based on the fundamental idea of evolution," and stated that "both man and ape are descended from a common ancestor." . . . The 1926 editions dropped Darwin's picture and replaced the word "evolution" with "development" in the opening. Some religious quotations were added to the otherwise unchanged chapters on evolution. . . . Seven years later, those chapters underwent a substantial overhaul, with passages about the evolution of man and natural selection deleted. Succeeding revisions during the forties and fifties further downgraded evolution, with the term itself finally disappearing.

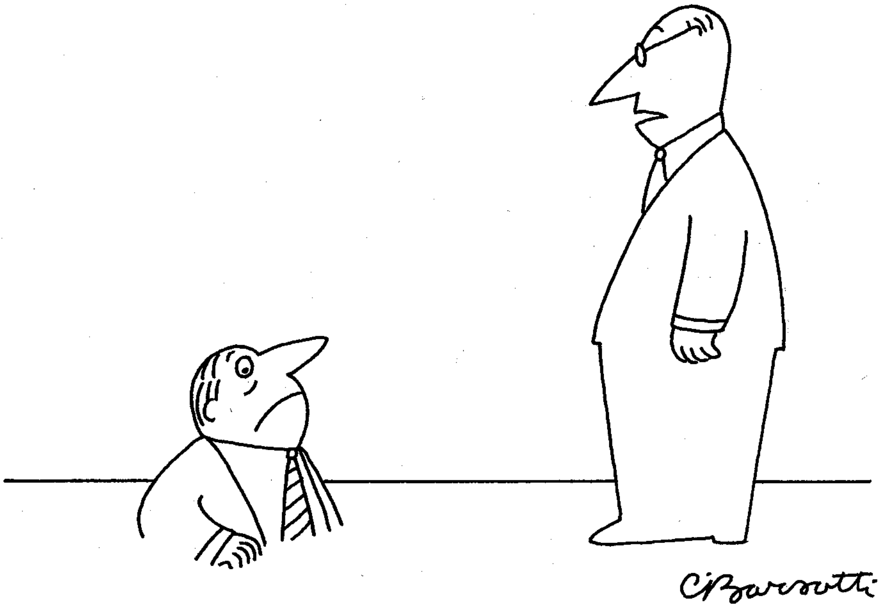
In 1958, Hermann J. Muller, a Nobel Prize-winning geneticist, gave an address marking the centenary, the following year, of "The Origin of Species," titled "One Hundred Years Without Darwinism Are Enough," in which he decried the dwindling treatment of evolution in American textbooks. His words were soon echoed by the paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson, who gave a speech with virtually the same title. Anxiety about keeping up with Soviet science lent urgency to these warnings, and the National Science Foundation started a program enlisting top biologists to rewrite textbooks.

As evolution began returning to the classroom, fundamentalists regrouped, this time under the banner of "scientific" creationism. In 1961, Henry Morris, an engineering professor at Virginia Tech, and John C. Whitcomb, a theologian, published "The Genesis Flood," which argued that the earth's rocks offered proof of the planet's young age, and that most of the earth's geological strata had been deposited at one time by a Great Flood. Morris went on to help found the Institute for Creation Research, the prototype for a new kind of creationism that sought the imprimatur of science.

At the same time, the Supreme Court elaborated a new interpretation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment. Historically, the Court had viewed the clause chiefly as an obstacle to a state-sponsored church; it now was more likely to apply the wall-of-separation metaphor that Thomas Jefferson had first enunciated in his 1802 "Letter to the Danbury Baptists." ("I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between church and state.") In 1962, the Court banned state-sponsored prayer in school. In 1963, in Abington School District v. Schempp, it outlawed the reading of Bible verses and the Lord's Prayer in public school. "To withstand the strictures of the 'establishment' clause, there must be a secular legislative purpose and a primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion," Justice Tom C. Clark wrote. This emphasis on purpose has been the source of much grumbling by conservative jurists: after all, critics say, should a law that sets aside money for homeless shelters be invalidated if the legislators who drafted it were motivated by Christian piety? Nevertheless, the "secular legislative purpose" test has been invoked in dozens of subsequent cases, and the precedent has become firmly entrenched in American law.

In 1965, Susan Epperson, the young high-school teacher, was married to an Air Force officer and living in Little Rock, Arkansas. She wanted to teach her students from one of the new biology textbooks that discussed evolution, but a 1928 state law banning the teaching of evolution prevented her from doing so. She brought suit and, eventually, appealed the case to the Supreme Court—which, citing the establishment clause, overturned the statute.

From then on, American courts have consistently defended evolution. Several recent court cases have even confirmed



“Quicksand in a modern office building? Don’t be silly.”

• •

that school districts which prevent public-school teachers from teaching creationism, or that mandate the teaching of evolution, do not violate free-speech rights. And last January U.S. District Judge Clarence Cooper ruled that stickers placed on the covers of textbooks in Cobb County, Georgia, stating that “evolution is a theory, not a fact” and should be “approached with an open mind, studied carefully and critically considered,” were the equivalent of “endorsing the viewpoint of Christian fundamentalists and creationists.” This decision does not bode well for intelligent design, since the sticker did not mention God and was not explicitly religious. (The decision has been appealed; a ruling from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit is expected next spring.)

Considering these precedents, the Dover Area School District is not likely to emerge victorious in Harrisburg. The plaintiffs made a very strong case that the primary motive behind the school board’s embrace of intelligent design was religious. Edward Larson, the Scopes historian, who teaches law and history at the University of Georgia, told me that he would not be surprised if Judge Jones rules that the Dover Area school board had also “entangled itself in a sectarian religious controversy.” He explained, “There is a large element among many religious believers who accept evolution or integrate it into their faith. So this is a religious dispute in which the state is intervening, potentially lending its authority to one side. . . . If you look at Dover, you see a town where the churches were divided, Christians were divided, *families* were divided over this.”

If Judge Jones does rule against the school board, he may simply say that its actions did not have a sufficiently secular purpose—that whether intelligent design is science or not, the board’s motive for putting it into the curriculum was religious, not pedagogical. But he could also make a more ambitious ruling—one that explicitly counters the claim that intelligent design is science.

Jones has a reputation for thoroughness and vigor; he told a local newspaper that he gets up at 4:30 A.M. six days a week to exercise and reads five newspapers a day. He is undoubtedly familiar with a 1982 case, McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education, which invalidated a statute mandating the teaching of creation science in public schools. The judge in that case, William R. Overton, delivered a sharply worded opinion in which he declared, “The essential characteristics of science are: (1) it is guided by natural law; (2) it has to be explanatory by reference to natural law; (3) it is testable against the empirical world; (4) its conclusions are tentative, i.e., not necessarily the final word; (5) it is falsifiable.” Creationism failed to meet these criteria, Overton concluded, and therefore could not be taught as science. The fact that Judge Jones admitted so much expert testimony—and, in ruling objections, showed a preference for more rather than less scientific information—suggests that he may similarly assess the credibility of intelligent design’s arguments. If not, he may at least incorporate into his opinion the fact that virtually every mainstream scientific group mentioned during the trial—from the National Academy of Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science to the Soil Science Society of America and the members of Michael Behe’s own department at Lehigh—describes intelligent design as unscientific.

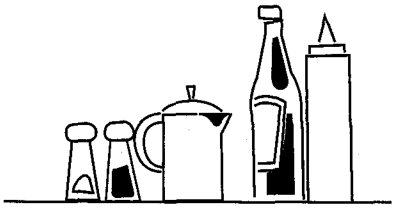
Over the past century, creationists have adapted to new environmental conditions. Thwarted in the effort to pass statutes that ban the teaching of evolution altogether, they tried statutes that called for “balance.” Stymied again, they’ve tried to introduce the proviso that evolution is “just a theory.” The idea that there is a design to nature has a long lineage—going back to Paley, at least, or arguably to Aristotle. Tellingly, its newest incarnation emerged in close tandem with the defeat of creationism in the courts. Barbara Forrest, a historian of the intelligent-design movement, testified at the trial that the first “Of Pandas and People” manuscripts contained the word “creationism” precisely where the words “intelligent design” appear now.

If intelligent design is defeated in the Dover case, its backers will undoubtedly find subtler ways of promoting it. The Discovery Institute, a pro-intelligent-design think tank based in Seattle, has distanced itself from the Dover case, saying that it prefers a “teach the controversy” approach to the blunt advertisement for intelligent design that Dover adopted. Indeed, during a public forum at the American Enterprise Institute last month, Mark Ryland, the director of the Discovery Institute’s Washington, D.C., office, said that his organization had “never set out to have school boards or schools get involved in this issue. We’ve never encouraged people to do it. . . . We have unfortunately gotten sucked into it because we have a lot of experts in this issue that people are interested in. When asked for our opinion we always tell people, Don't teach intelligent design. There's no curriculum developed for it. Your teachers are likely to be hostile towards it. . . . If you want to do anything, you should teach the evidence against Darwin's theory. Teach it dialectically." Ryland was being disingenuous: Two Discovery Institute fellows, David DeWolf and Stephen Meyer, are co-authors of a book called "Intelligent Design in Public School Science Curricula," which concludes, "School boards have the authority to permit, and even encourage, teaching about design theory as an alternative to Darwinian evolution—and this includes the use of textbooks such as 'Of Pandas and People.' " And Casey Luskin, a staff member at the institute, recently wrote an article in the *Journal of Church and State* in which he noted that "intelligent design may clearly be currently taught where there is no policy on teaching intelligent design." He added, "Most districts have no policy about teaching intelligent design." In other words, so long as it can be done sub rosa, why bring intelligent design to court, where, as Ryland observed, "there is a potential for rulings" that it "is somehow unconstitutional"?

The "teach the conflicts" rationale for working intelligent design into public-school science classes has a certain appeal. It sounds to some people like a healthy aversion to orthodoxy. Of course, most scientists don't like it, because in science—as opposed to, say, literary criticism—interpretations can be wrong. Kevin Padian, the paleontologist, told me, with characteristic bluntness, that the problem with this approach is that "it makes people stupid. It pretends there is confusion where there is not and it wastes children's time." And, in the end, fundamentalist Christians who would likely appreciate any notion that softens the ground for creationism might find "teaching the conflicts"—phraseology lifted straight from the left-wing academy of the eighties—a little too postmodern for their taste. Already, you can see some strange and probably not too stable alliances along these lines. In Harrisburg, for instance, the defense offered as a witness Steve Fuller, a sociologist of science at the University of Warwick, in England. Fuller, who wore thick-framed Woody Allen-style glasses, waved his arms a lot, and delivered profuse answers at a breathless pace, said that he thought evolution offered a better explanation of biological diversity than intelligent design, but he also argued that it was "kind of bad news epistemologically" to have "taken-for-granted theories" like evolution "in any given discipline." Besides, he added, it might be interesting if science was "reconfigured so that the notion of design would be taken as a kind of literal unifying concept." Fuller bounced with glib, manic energy as he riffed on the history of science (at one point, the Judge suggested taking a break—"water or decaf only"), dispensing postmodern lingo about science as "a self-perpetuating élite" committed to "policing" its own boundaries. Yet it was hard to imagine, say, Bill Buckingham sitting down to coffee—even decaf—with Steve Fuller.

On the last day of the trial, Theatre Harrisburg opened a production of "Inherit the Wind" in an arts center a block from the courthouse. William Parkinson, the York *Dispatch* editorial-page editor, had a part in the show as a lawyer for the prosecution. I recognized somebody else in the cast, a local fellow who had often come to the trial, and had held forth about evolution in the hallways with such vigor that at first I'd thought he was one of the plaintiffs. The program notes, which were written by the theatre's dramaturge, Kevin Pry, noted that, in a courtroom very near this theatre, "once again, the battle has been joined, dividing our people, making many out of the one that we hope America can be, and reminding us of the truth of the injunction from Proverbs from which the play takes its title, 'he that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind.' Welcome to the eye of the hurricane, folks!" The production was a good one, though the judge isn't much of a presence in the play, and I missed Judge Jones, with his deft one-liners and his capacity for projecting American good sense.

Near the end of "Inherit the Wind," Henry Drummond, the character based on Clarence Darrow, is comforting Bert Cates, the John Scopes character, after his conviction. "Sure, it's gonna be tough, it's not gonna be any church social for a while," Drummond says. "But you'll live. And while they're making you sweat, remember—you've helped the next fella." Cates asks what he means, and Drummond replies, "You don't suppose this kind of thing is ever *finished*, do you?" That line got a rueful laugh.



In an election on November 8th, four days after the trial, the eight school-board candidates who ran on a slate opposing the addition of intelligent design to the science curriculum won a resounding victory. (One of the candidates was Bryan Rehm, the former Dover High teacher who was a plaintiff in the case.) From the opposing slate, which had recently circulated leaflets tying the A.C.L.U. to the American Man/Boy Love Association, not a single candidate was elected. The two candidates who got the least votes were Alan Bonsell and Sheila Harkins, the two most closely associated with the curriculum change. By declining to drop the statement about intelligent design when they were threatened with a lawsuit, the former board members had chosen a path that could require the Dover Area School District to pay the legal fees for the plaintiffs—probably upward of a million dollars. After the election, the new board said that it would abide by Judge Jones's decision. Therefore, his ruling may be the final word on the case. These developments did not please the televangelist Pat Robertson, who addressed the citizens of Dover on his program. "If there is a disaster in your area, don't turn to God," he said. "You just rejected Him from your city."

In the final minutes of the trial, Judge Jones closed the proceedings with an eloquent speech about how proud he was of everyone in the courtroom, and what great lawyering he'd been privileged to see. Then Patrick Gillen, the soft-spoken lawyer from the Thomas More center, stood up to say something. For all his awareness of what this trial was about, he could not suppress a religious reference. "By my reckoning, this is the fortieth day since the trial began and tonight will be the fortieth night," Gillen said.

"Mr. Gillen, that is an interesting coincidence," Judge Jones replied. "But it was not by design." ♦

EAST BOSTON, 1996

I

Armed Conflict

Snowy light fills the room
pronouncing itself

softly. The telephone ringing

in the deserted city—

On the Bus

It's one thing when you're twenty-one,
and I was way past twenty-one.
With unshaven face half concealed in the collar
of some deceased porcine philanthropist's
black cashmere rag of a coat,
I knew that I looked like a suicide
returning an overdue book to the library.
Almost everyone else did as well,
but I found no particular solace in this;
at best, the fact awakened some diverting speculations
on the comparative benefits
of waiting in front of a ditch to be shot
alone or in the company
of others, and then whether one would prefer
these last hypothetical others
to be friends, family, enemies, total
or relative strangers. Would you hold hands?
Or would you rather like a good *Homo sapiens*
monster employ them
to cover your genitals?
What percentage would lose bowel control?
And given time restrictions—
and assuming some still had the ability to move—
would ostracism result? Anyway,
I knew the rules on this bus.
No eye contact: the eyes of the terrified
terrify. Look
like you know where you're going,
possess ample change to get there,
and don't move your lips when you talk
to yourself: the destroyed
and sick, the poor, the hungry
and the disturbed estrange.
The badly dressed estrange, even,
and that is uncalled for. The degree
of one's power to estrange will increase
in direct proportion to the depth
of need for others. Do not cry.
This can only bring about, on the one hand,
an instant condition of banishment
from the sole available companionship or,
on the other, a *near-*
fatal beating (one more disappointment).
Just follow the simple instruction
if you ever come here.
It's easy to remember—any idiot can do it.
Don't cry,
the world has abandoned us.

Night Walk

The all-night convenience store's empty
and no one is behind the counter.
You open and shut the glass door a few times
causing a bell to go off,
but no one appears. You only came
to buy a pack of cigarettes, maybe
a copy of yesterday's newspaper—
finally you take one and leave
thirty-five cents in its place.
It is freezing, but it is a good thing
to step outside again:
you can feel less alone in the night,
with lights on here and there
between the dark buildings and trees.
Your own among them, somewhere.
There must be thousands of people
in this city who are dying
to welcome you into their small bolted rooms,
to sit you down and tell you
what has happened to their lives.
And the night smells like snow.
Walking home, for a moment
you almost believe you could start again.
And an intense love rushes to your heart,
and hope. It's unendurable, unendurable.

Solitary Play: Minnesota, 1961

In a clearing in the cornstalks, in light
November snow it was suggested
that I fire
on that muttering family of crows.
I complied
and watched as those big ruffled shadows
rose from the ground, scattered and vanished
in the direction of barren
border trees, commencing
to speak all at once
in hysterical tongues.
All except for one,
deceased.

I turned it over with my boot.
The eyes stared
at the sky, the minute
snowflakes falling into them.
Its beak was partly opened.
It was then I vomited a little.
This achievement was the last thing I'd expected
when they dug up the old .22
for my afternoon's amusement
and banishment. I was just eight, but I swore
then and there
my career as death was finished.
The ground was hard but I considered
going back to the house for a shovel;
it did not seem wholly implausible
that I might turn around to find
my victim limping after me,
and I ended up walking *away* from the house
for an hour or so.
Later on I cried and told my mother.
She comforted me, as I knew perfectly well she would.
In her opinion I was not to blame.
It was that gun. And besides,
she was certain crows had their own heaven.
I was off the hook.
My crow was much better off now.
That's what she thought.

Home Remedy

You could call someone
where it's still early.

Go out and look at the stars
shining
in the past.

Or open the Joachim Jeremias to the densely printed
page, its corner folded
for some reason
not yet remembered

before you set the clock.

You have to set the clock—
for a moment that doesn't exist yet
or one that has already passed, interestingly
symbolized by the identical numeral.

The friendly medications are beginning
to kick in: the frightening
objects
emitting the faint nimbus
of their reality, slowly
returning
to normal,

if this had been an actual emergency.

II

The long silences need to be loved, perhaps
more than the words
which arrive
to describe them
in time.

Reparations

The day's coming
when I will no longer consider
my mere presence inexpiable.
I will place my hand in that flame
and feel nothing.
I will ask nobody's forgiveness again.
Or I will just go
among people no more—
I may writhe with
remorse in the night, but
the operation must be
undertaken by
me, anesthesialess.
No one must be asked to relinquish
a grievance that can't be removed
without further destruction, it may be
it is lodged in who he is now
like a bullet in a brain
whose removal might only worsen its change.
The forgiveness! I know it
will be freely offered
or it won't, and that is all—
and no one may bestow it
on himself.
If it is to come
it will come of itself like a separate
being,
a mystery, working
unseen as a wind causes still
leaves or water to move once again.
And hide me in the shadow of Your wings.

Let the heart be moved again.

—*Franz Wright*

FICTION

WENLOCK EDGE

BY ALICE MUNRO

My mother had a bachelor cousin a good deal younger than her, who used to visit us on the farm every summer. He brought along his mother, Aunt Nell Botts. His own name was Ernie Botts. He was a tall, florid man with a good-natured expression, a big square face, and fair curly hair springing straight up from his forehead. His hands, his fingernails were as clean as soap itself; his hips were a little plump. My name for him—when he was not around—was Earnest Bottom. I had a mean tongue.

But I meant no harm. Or hardly any harm.

After Aunt Nell Botts died Ernie did not come to visit anymore, but he always sent a Christmas card.

When I started college in the city where he lived, he began a custom of taking me out to dinner every other Sunday evening. He did this because I was a relative—it's unlikely that he even considered whether we were suited to spending time together. He always took me to the same place, a restaurant called the Old Chelsea, which was on the second floor of a building, looking down on Dundas Street. It had velvet curtains, white tablecloths, little rose-shaded lamps on the tables. It probably cost more, strictly speaking, than he could afford, but I did not think of that, having a country girl's notion that all men who lived in the city, wore a suit every day, and sported such clean fingernails had reached a level of prosperity where indulgences like this were a matter of course.

I always ordered the most exotic offering on the menu—chicken vol au vent or duck *à l'orange*—while he always ate roast beef. Desserts were wheeled up to the table on a dinner wagon: a tall coconut cake, custard tarts topped with strawberries, even out of season, chocolate-coated pastry horns full of whipped cream. I took a long time choosing, like a five-year-old trying to decide between flavors of ice cream, and then on Monday I had to fast all day, to make up for such gorging.

Ernie looked a little too young to be my father. I hoped that nobody from the college would see us and think that he was my boyfriend.

He inquired about my courses, and nodded solemnly when I told him, or reminded him, that I was in Honors English and Philosophy. He didn't roll his eyes at the information, the way people at home did. He told me that he had a great respect for education and regretted that he hadn't had the means to continue, after high school. Instead, he had got a job working for the Canadian National Railway, as a ticket salesman. Now he was a supervisor.

He liked serious reading, he said, but it was not a substitute for a college education.

I was pretty sure that his idea of serious reading would be the Condensed Books of the *Reader's Digest*, and to get him off the subject of my studies I told him about my rooming house. In those days, the college had no dormitories—we all lived in rooming houses or in cheap apartments or in fraternity or sorority houses. My room was the attic of an old house, with generous floor space and not much headroom. But, being the former maid's quarters, it had its own bathroom. Two other scholarship students, who were in their final year in Modern Languages, lived on the second floor. Their names were Kay and Beverly. In the high-ceilinged but chopped-up rooms of the ground floor lived a medical student who was hardly ever home, and his wife, Beth, who was home all the time, because they had two very young children. Beth was the house manager and rent collector, and she was often feuding with the second-floor girls over the way they washed their clothes in the bathroom and hung them there to dry. When Beth's husband, Blake, was home he sometimes had to use that bathroom because of all the baby stuff in the one downstairs, and Beth said that he shouldn't have to cope with stockings and other intimate doodads in his face. Kay and Beverly retorted that use of their own bathroom had been promised when they moved in.

Why did I choose to tell this to Ernie, who flushed and said that they should have got it in writing?

Kay and Beverly were a disappointment to me. They worked hard at Modern Languages, but their conversation and preoccupations seemed hardly different from those of girls who worked in banks or offices. They did their hair up in pincurls and polished their fingernails on Saturdays, because that was the night they had dates with their special boyfriends. On Sundays, they had to soothe their faces with lotion because of the whisker-burns the boyfriends had inflicted on them. I didn't find either boyfriend in the least desirable and I wondered how they could.

They said that they had once had some crazy idea of working as intepreters at the United Nations but now they figured they would teach high school, and with any luck get married.

They gave me unwelcome advice.

I had got a job in the college cafeteria. I pushed a cart around collecting dirty dishes and wiping the tables clean.

They warned me that this job was not a good idea.

"You won't get asked out if people see you at a job like that."

I told Ernie about this and he said, "So, what did you say?"

I told him that I'd said I wouldn't want to go out with anybody who would make such a judgment, so what was the problem?

Now I'd hit the right note. Ernie glowed; he chopped his hands up and down in the air.

"Absolutely right," he said. "That is absolutely the attitude to take. Honest work. Never listen to anybody who wants to put you down for doing honest work. Just go right ahead and ignore them. Keep your pride. Anybody that doesn't like it, you tell them they can lump it."

This speech of his, the righteousness and approval lighting his large face, the jerky enthusiasm of his movements, roused the first doubts in me, the first gloomy suspicion that the warning might have some weight to it after all.

When I got home that night, there was a note from Beth under my door, asking to talk to me. I guessed that it would be about my hanging my coat over the bannister to dry, or making too much noise on the stairs when Blake (sometimes) and the babies (always) had to sleep in the daytime.

The door opened on the scene of misery and confusion in which it seemed that all Beth's days were passed. Wet laundry—diapers and smelly baby woollens—was hanging from ceiling racks; bottles bubbled and rattled in a sterilizer on the stove. The windows were steamed up, and the chairs were covered with soggy cloths and soiled stuffed

CARLA VAN DE PUTTELAAR/VAN ZOETENDAAL GALLERY

toys. The bigger baby was clinging to the bars of a playpen and letting out an accusing howl—Beth had obviously just set him in there—and the smaller one was in a high chair, with some mushy pumpkin-colored food spread like a rash across his mouth and chin.

Beth peered out from all this with a tight expression of superiority on her small flat face, as if to say that not many people could put up with such a nightmare as well as she could, even if the world wasn't generous enough to give her the least bit of credit.

"You know when you moved in," she said, then raised her voice to be heard over the bigger baby's cries, "when you moved in I mentioned to you that there was enough space up there for two?"

Another girl was moving in, she informed me. The new girl would be there Tuesdays to Fridays, while she audited some courses at the college.

"Blake will bring the daybed up tonight. She won't take up much room. I don't imagine she'll bring many clothes—she lives in town. You've had it all to yourself for six weeks now, and you'll still have it that way on weekends."

No mention of any reduction in the rent.

Nina actually did not take up much room. She was small, and thoughtful in her movements—she never bumped her head against the rafters, as I did. She spent a lot of her time sitting cross-legged on the daybed, her brownish-blond hair falling over her face, a Japanese kimono loose over her childish white underwear. She had beautiful clothes—a camel-hair coat, cashmere sweaters, a pleated tartan skirt with a large silver pin—the sort of clothes you would see in a magazine layout, under the headline "Outfitting Your Junior Miss for Her New Life on Campus." But the moment she got back from the college she discarded her costume for the kimono. I also changed out of my school clothes, but in my case it was to keep the press in my skirt and preserve a reasonable freshness in my blouse or sweater, so I hung everything up carefully. Nina tossed her clothes anywhere. I ate an early supper at the college as part of my wages, and Nina always seemed to have eaten, too, though I didn't know where. Perhaps her supper was just what she ate all evening—almonds and oranges and a supply of little chocolate kisses wrapped in red or gold or purple foil.

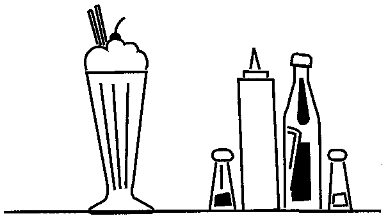
I asked her if she didn't get cold, in that light kimono.

"Unh-unh," she said. She grabbed my hand and pressed it to her neck. "I'm permanently warm," she said, and in fact she was. Her skin even looked warm, though she said that was just a tan, and it was fading. And connected with this skin warmth was a particular odor that was nutty or spicy, not displeasing but not the odor of a body that was constantly bathed and showered. (Nor was I entirely fresh myself, owing to Beth's rule of two baths a week.)

I usually read until late at night. I'd thought that it might be harder to read, with someone else in the room, but Nina was an easy presence. She peeled her oranges and chocolates; she laid out games of solitaire. When she had to stretch to move a card she'd sometimes make a little noise, a groan or grunt, as if complaining about this slight adjustment of her body but taking pleasure in it, all the same. Otherwise she was content, and curled up to sleep with the light on whenever she was ready. And because there was no special need for us to talk we soon began to talk, and tell about our lives.

Nina was twenty-two years old and this was what had happened to her since she was fifteen:

First, she had got herself pregnant (that was how she put it) and married the father, who wasn't much older than she was. This was in a town somewhere outside Chicago. The name of the town was Laneyville, and the only jobs there were at the grain elevator or fixing machinery, for the boys, and working in stores, for the girls. Nina's ambition was to be a hairdresser but you had to go away and train for that. Laneyville wasn't where she had always lived—it was where her grandmother lived, and she lived with her grandmother because her father had died and her mother had got married again and her stepfather had kicked her out.



She had a second baby, another boy, and her husband was supposed to have a job lined up in another town so he went off there. He was going to send for her but he never did. So she left both children with her grandmother and took the bus to Chicago.

On the bus she met a girl named Marcy, who, like her, was headed for Chicago. Marcy knew a man there who owned a restaurant and she said he would give them jobs. But when they got to Chicago and located the restaurant it turned out that the man didn't own it—he'd only worked there and he'd quit some time before. The man who did own it had an empty room upstairs and he let them stay there in return for their cleaning the place up every night. They had to use the ladies' room in the restaurant but they weren't supposed to spend too much time there in the daytime—they had to wash themselves at night.

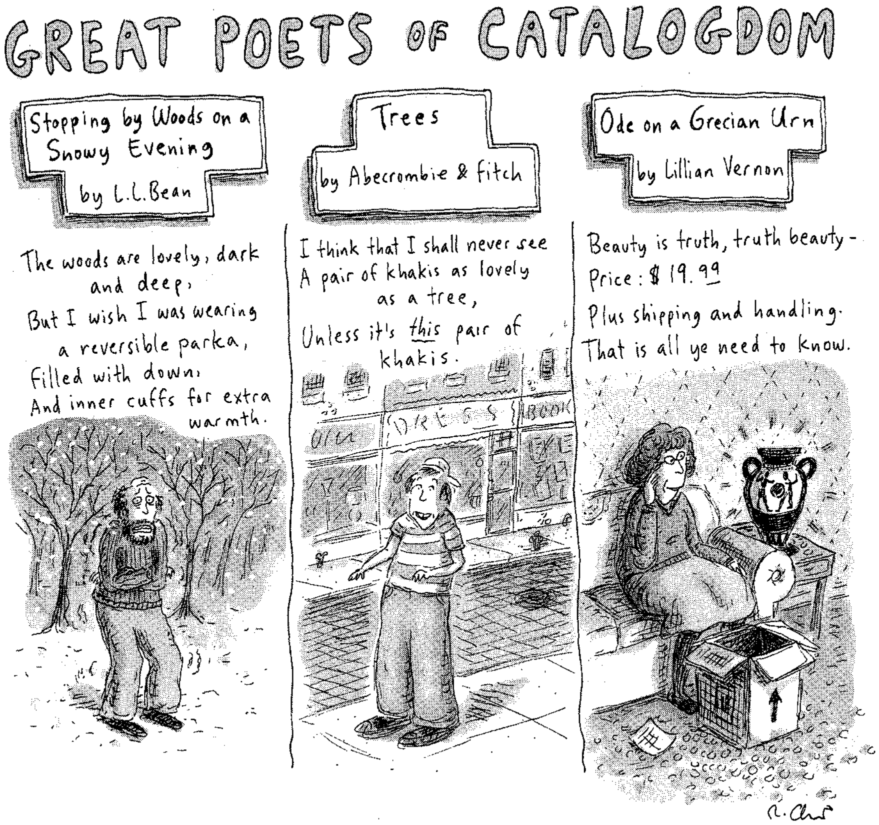
They didn't sleep hardly at all. They made friends with the barman in the place across the street—he was a queer but nice—and he let them drink ginger ale for free. They met a man there who invited them to a party and after that they got asked to other parties and it was during this time that Nina met Mr. Purvis. It was he, in fact, who gave her the name Nina. Before that, she had been June. She went to live at Mr. Purvis's place in Chicago.

She waited a little while before bringing up the subject of her boys. There was so much room in Mr. Purvis's house that she was hoping they could live with her there. But when she mentioned it Mr. Purvis told her that he despised children. He did not want her to get pregnant, ever. But somehow she did, and she and Mr. Purvis went to Japan, to get her an abortion.

At least up until the last minute that was what she thought she would do, but then she decided, no. She would go ahead and have the baby.

"All right," he said. He would pay her way back to Chicago, but from then on she was on her own.

She knew her way around a bit by this time, and she went to a place where they looked after you till the baby was born, and you could have it adopted. It was born and it was a girl and Nina named her Gemma and decided to keep her, after all.


GREAT POETS OF CATALOGDOM
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by L.L.Bean
The woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I wish I was wearing a reversible parka, Filled with down, And inner cuffs for extra warmth.
Trees by Abercrombie & Fitch
I think that I shall never see A pair of khakis as lovely as a tree, Unless it's this pair of khakis.
Ode on a Grecian Urn by Lillian Vernon
Beauty is truth, truth beauty - Price: $19.99 Plus shipping and handling. That is all ye need to know.
R. Chast

She knew another girl who had had a baby in this place and kept it, and she and this girl made an arrangement that they would work shifts and live together and raise their babies. They got an apartment that they could afford and they got jobs—Nina's in a cocktail lounge—and everything was all right. Then Nina came home just before Christmas—Gemma was eight months old—and found the other mother half drunk and fooling around with a man, and the baby, Gemma, burning up with fever, too sick to even cry.

Nina wrapped her up and took her to the hospital in a cab. Traffic was all snarled up because of Christmas, and when she finally got there they told her that it was the wrong hospital, for some reason, and sent her off to another hospital. On the way there, Gemma had a convulsion and died.

Nina wanted to have a real burial for Gemma, not just have her put in with some old pauper who had died (that was what she'd heard happened to a baby's body when you didn't have any money), so she went to Mr. Purvis. He was nicer to her than she'd expected, and he paid for the casket and the gravestone with Gemma's name, and after it was all over he took Nina back. He took her on a long trip to London and Paris and a lot of other places, to cheer her up. When they got home he shut up the house in Chicago and moved here. He owned some property out in the country nearby; he owned racehorses.

He asked her if she would like to get an education, and she said she would. He said she should just sit in on some courses to see what she'd like to study. She told him that she'd like to live part of the time the way ordinary students lived, and he said he thought that that could be arranged.

Hearing about Nina's life made me feel like a simpleton.

I asked her what Mr. Purvis's first name was.

"Arthur."

"Why don't you call him that?"

"It wouldn't sound natural."

Nina was not supposed to go out at night, except to the college for certain specified events, such as a play or a concert or a lecture. She was supposed to eat lunch and dinner at the cafeteria. Though, as I said, I don't know whether she ever did. Breakfast was Nescafé in our room, and day-old doughnuts I brought home from the cafeteria. Mr. Purvis did not like the sound of this but he accepted it as part of Nina's imitation of the college student's life—as long as she ate a good hot meal once a day and a sandwich and soup at another meal, and this was what he thought she did. She always checked what the cafeteria was offering, so that she could tell him she'd had the sausages or the Salisbury steak, and the salmon or the egg-salad sandwich.

"So how would he know if you did go out?"

Nina got to her feet, with that little sound of complaint or pleasure, and padded over to the attic window.

"Come here," she said. "And stay behind the curtain. See?"

A black car, parked not right across the street but a few doors down. A streetlight caught the gleaming white hair of the driver.

"Mrs. Winner," Nina said. "She'll be there till midnight. Or later, I don't know. If I went out, she'd follow me and hang around wherever I went, then follow me back."

"What if she went to sleep?"

"Not her. Or if she did and I tried anything she'd be awake like a shot."

Just to give Mrs. Winner some practice, as Nina put it, we left the house one evening and took a bus to the city library. From the bus window we watched the long black car having to slow and dawdle at every bus stop, then speed up to stay with us. We had to walk a block to the library, and Mrs. Winner passed us and parked beyond the front entrance, and watched us—we believed—in her rearview mirror.

I wanted to see if I could check out a copy of "The Scarlet Letter," which was required for one of my courses. I could not afford to buy one, and the copies at the college library were all checked out. Also I wanted to take a book out for Nina—the sort of book that showed simplified charts of history.

Nina had bought the textbooks for the courses she was auditing. She had bought notebooks and pens—the best fountain pens of that time—in matching colors. Red for Pre-Columbian Civilizations, blue for the Romantic Poets, green for Victorian and Georgian English Novelists, yellow for Fairy Tales from Basile to Andersen. She sat in the back row at every lecture, because she thought that that was the proper place for her. She spoke as if she enjoyed walking through the Arts Building with the throng of other students, finding her seat, opening her textbook at the specified page, taking out her pen. But her notebooks remained empty.

The trouble was, as I saw it, that she had no pegs to hang anything on. She did not know what Victorian meant, or Romantic, or Pre-Columbian. She had been to Japan, and Barbados, and many of the countries in Europe, but she could never have found those places on a map. She wouldn't have known whether the French Revolution came before or after the First World War.

I wondered how these courses had been chosen for her. Had she liked the sound of them? Had Mr. Purvis thought that she could master them? Or had he perhaps chosen them cynically, so that she would soon get her fill of being a student?

While I was looking for the book I wanted, I caught sight of Ernie Botts. He had an armful of mysteries, which he was picking up for an old friend of his mother's. He had told me that he always did that, just as he always played checkers, on Saturday mornings, with a crony of his father's out in the War Veterans' Home.

I introduced him to Nina. I had told him about her moving in, but nothing about her former or even her present life.

He shook Nina's hand and said that he was pleased to meet her and asked at once if he could give us a ride home.

I was about to say no, thanks, we'd take the bus, when Nina asked him where his car was parked.

"In the back," he said.

"Is there a back door?"

"Yes, yes. It's a sedan."

"No, I meant in the library," Nina said. "In the building."

"Yes. Yes there is," Ernie said, flustered. "I'm sorry, I thought you meant the car. Yes. A back door in the library. I came in that way myself. I'm sorry." Now he was blushing, and he would have gone on apologizing if Nina had not broken in with a kind laugh.

"Well, then," she said. "We can go out the back door. So that's settled. Thanks."

Ernie drove us home. He asked if we would like to detour to his place, for a cup of coffee or a hot chocolate.

"Sorry, we're sort of in a rush," Nina said. "But thanks for asking."

"I guess you've got homework."

"Homework, yes," she said. "We sure do."

I was thinking that he had never once asked me to his house. Propriety. One girl, no. Two girls, O.K.

No black car across the street, when we said our thanks and good nights. No black car when we looked out the attic window. In a short time, the phone rang, for Nina, and I heard her saying, on the landing, "Oh, no, we just went in the library and got a book and came straight home on the bus. There was one right away, yes. I'm fine. Absolutely. Night-night." She came swaying and smiling up the stairs. "Mrs. Winner's got herself in hot water tonight."

One morning, Nina did not get out of bed. She said she had a sore throat, a fever. "Touch me."

"You always feel hot to me."

"Today I'm hotter."

It was a Friday. She asked me to call Mr. Purvis, to tell him that she wanted to stay here for the weekend.

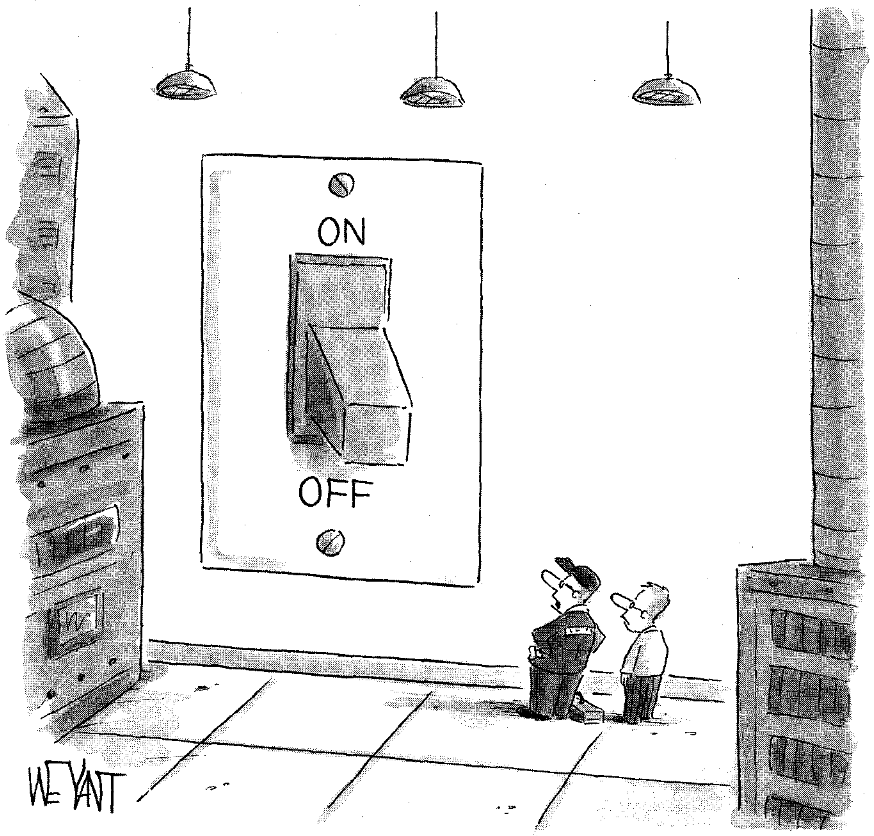
"He'll let me. He can't stand anybody being sick around him—he's a nut that way."

Mr. Purvis wondered if he should send a doctor. Nina had foreseen that, and told me to say that she just needed to rest, and she'd phone him, or I would, if she got any worse. "Well, then, tell her to take care," he said, and thanked me for phoning, and for being a good friend to Nina. And then, as an afterthought, he asked me if I would like to join him for Saturday night's dinner. He said he found it boring to eat alone. Nina had thought of that, too.

"If he asks you to go and eat with him tomorrow night, why don't you go? There's always something good to eat on Saturday nights—it's special."

The cafeteria was closed on Saturdays. The possibility of meeting Mr. Purvis both disturbed and intrigued me.

So I agreed to dine with him—he had actually said "dine." When I went back upstairs, I asked Nina what I



"Yup. I'm guessing there's your problem."

should wear. "Why worry now? It's not till tomorrow night."

Why worry, indeed? I had only one good dress, the turquoise crêpe that I had bought with some of my scholarship money, to wear when I gave the valedictory address at my high-school commencement exercises.

Mrs. Winner came to get me. Her hair was not white but platinum blond, a color that to me certified a hard heart, immoral dealings, and a long bumpy ride through the sordid back alleys of life. Nevertheless, I opened the front door of the car to ride beside her, because I thought that that was the decent and democratic thing to do. She let me do this, standing beside me, then briskly opened the back door.

I had thought that Mr. Purvis would live in one of the stodgy mansions surrounded by acres of lawns and unfarmed fields north of the city. It was probably the racehorses that had made me think so. Instead, we travelled east through prosperous but not lordly streets, past brick and mock-Tudor houses with their lights on in the early dark and their Christmas lights already blinking out of the snowcapped shrubbery. We turned in at a narrow driveway between high hedges and parked in front of a house that I recognized as "modern" by its flat roof and long wall of windows and the fact that the building material appeared to be concrete. No Christmas lights here, no lights of any kind.

No sign of Mr. Purvis, either. The car slid down a ramp into a cavernous basement garage; we rode an elevator up one floor and emerged into a hallway that was dimly lit and furnished like a living room, with upholstered straight-backed chairs and little polished tables and mirrors and rugs.

Mrs. Winner waved me ahead of her through one of the doors that opened off this hallway, into a windowless room with a bench and hooks around the walls. It was just like a school cloakroom, except for the polish on the wood and the carpet on the floor. "Here is where you leave your clothes," Mrs. Winner said.

I removed my top boots. I stuffed my mittens into my coat pockets. I hung my coat up. Mrs. Winner stayed with me. There was a comb in my pocket and I wanted to fix my hair, but not with her watching. And I did not see a mirror.

"Now the rest," she said.

She looked straight at me to see if I understood, and, when I appeared not to (though, in a sense, I did—I understood but hoped I had made a mistake), she said, "Don't worry, you won't be cold. The house is well heated throughout."

I did not move to obey, and she spoke to me casually, as if she could not be bothered with contempt. "I hope you're not a baby."

I could have reached for my coat, at that point. I could have demanded to be driven back to the rooming house. I could even have walked back on my own. I remembered the way we had come and, though it would have been cold, it would have taken me less than an hour.

"Oh, no," Mrs. Winner said, when I still did not move. "So you're just a bookworm. That's all you are."

I sat down. I removed my shoes. I unfastened and peeled down my stockings. I stood up and unzipped then yanked off the dress in which I had delivered the valedictory address with its final words of Latin. *Ave atque vale.*

Still covered by my slip, I reached back and unhooked my brassiere, then somehow hauled it free of my arms and around to the front to be discarded. Next came my garter belt, then my panties—when they were off I balled them up and hid them under the brassiere. I put my feet back into my shoes.

"Bare feet," Mrs. Winner said, sighing. It seemed that the slip was too tiresome for her to mention, but after I had again taken my shoes off she said, "Bare. Do you know the meaning of the word? *Bare.*"

I pulled the slip over my head, and she handed me a bottle of lotion and said, "Rub yourself with this."

It smelled like Nina. I rubbed some on my arms and shoulders, the only parts of myself that I could touch, with Mrs. Winner standing there watching, and then we went out into the hall, my eyes avoiding the mirrors, and she opened another door and I went into the next room alone.

It had not occurred to me that Mr. Purvis might be waiting in the same naked condition as myself, and he was not. He wore a dark-blue blazer, a white shirt, an ascot scarf (though I did not know it was called that at the time), and gray slacks. He was hardly taller than I was, and he was thin and old, mostly bald, with wrinkles in his forehead when he smiled.

It had not occurred to me, either, that the undressing might be a prelude to rape, or to any ceremony but supper. (And indeed it was not, to judge by the appetizing smells in the room and the silver-lidded dishes on the sideboard.) But why hadn't I thought of such a thing? Why wasn't I more apprehensive? It had something to do with my ideas about old men. I thought that they were not only incapable, owing to their unsavory physical decline, but too worn down—or depressed—by their various trials and experiences to have any interest left. I wasn't stupid enough to think that my being undressed had nothing to do with the sexual uses of my body, but I took it more as a dare than as a preliminary to further trespass, and my going along with it finally had more to do with pride or some shaky recklessness than with anything else. And that word. "Bookworm."

Here I am, I might have wished to say, in the skin of my body which does not shame me any more than the bareness of my teeth. Of course that was not true, and in fact I had broken out in a sweat, but not for fear of any violation.

Mr. Purvis shook my hand, making no sign of awareness that I lacked clothing. He said that it was a pleasure for him to meet Nina's friend. Just as if I were somebody Nina had brought home from school. Which, in a way, was true. An inspiration to Nina, he said I was.

"She admires you very much. Now, you must be hungry. Shall we see what they've provided for us?"

He lifted the lids and set about serving me. Cornish hens, which I took to be pygmy chickens, saffron rice with raisins, various finely cut vegetables fanned out at an angle and preserving their color more faithfully than the vegetables that I regularly saw. A dish of muddy-green pickles and a dish of dark-red preserve.

"Not too much of these," Mr. Purvis said of the pickles and the preserve. "A bit hot to start with."

He ushered me back to the table, turned again to the sideboard and served himself sparingly, and sat down.

There was a pitcher of water on the table, and a bottle of wine. I got the water. Serving me wine in his house, he

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said, would probably be classed as a capital offense. I was a little disappointed, as I never had had a chance to drink wine. When Ernie and I went to the Old Chelsea, he always expressed his satisfaction that no wine or liquor was served on Sundays. Not only did he refuse to drink, on Sunday or on any other day, but he disliked seeing others do it.

"Now, Nina tells me," Mr. Purvis said, "Nina tells me that you are studying English Philosophy, but I think it must be English *and* Philosophy, am I right? Because surely there is not so great a supply of English philosophers?"

In spite of his warning, I had taken a dollop of green pickle on my tongue and was too stunned to reply. He waited courteously while I gulped down water.

"We start with the Greeks. It's a survey course," I said, when I could speak.

"Oh yes. Greece. Well, who is your favorite Greek so far—Oh, no, just a minute. It will fall apart more easily like this."

There followed a demonstration of how to separate and remove the meat from the bones of a Cornish hen—nicely done, and without condescension, rather as if it were a joke we might share. "Your favorite?"

"We haven't got to him yet—we're doing the pre-Socratics," I said. "But Plato."

"Plato is your favorite. So you read ahead, you don't just stay where you're supposed to? Plato. Yes, I could have guessed that. You like the cave?"

"Yes."

"Yes, of course. The cave. It's beautiful, isn't it?"

When I was sitting down, the most flagrant part of me was out of sight. If my breasts had been tiny and ornamental, like Nina's, I could have been almost at ease. Instead, they were large and lollopy; they were like bald night creatures dumbfounded by the light. I tried to look at him when I spoke, but against my will I suffered waves of flushing. When this happened, I thought I sensed his voice changing slightly, becoming more soothing and politely satisfied, as if he'd just made a winning move in a game. But he went on talking nimbly and entertainingly, telling me about a trip he had made to Greece. Delphi, the Acropolis, the famous light that you didn't believe could be true but was true, the bare bones of the Peloponnesus.

"And then to Crete—do you know about the Minoan civilization?"

"Yes."

"Of course you do. Of course. And you know the way the Minoan ladies dressed?"

"Yes."

I looked into his face this time, his eyes. I was determined not to squirm away, not even when I felt the heat on my throat.

"Very nice, that style," he said almost sadly. "Very nice. It's odd the different things that are hidden in different eras. And the things that are displayed."

Dessert was vanilla custard and whipped cream, with bits of cake in it, and raspberries. He ate only a few bites of his. But, after failing to settle down enough to enjoy the first course, I was determined not to miss out on anything rich and sweet, and I fixed my appetite and attention on every spoonful.

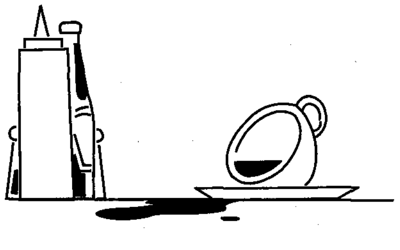
He poured coffee into small cups and invited me to drink it in the library.

My buttocks made a slapping noise, as I loosened myself from the sleek upholstery of the dining-room chair. But this was almost covered up by the clatter of the delicate coffee cups on the tray, in his shaky old grasp.

Libraries in houses were known to me only from books. This one was entered through a panel in the dining-room wall. The panel swung open without a sound, at a touch of his raised foot. He apologized for going ahead of me, as he had to do when he carried the coffee. To me it was a relief. I thought that the back of the body—not just mine but anyone's—was the most beastly part.

When I was seated in the chair he indicated, he gave me my coffee. It was not as easy to sit here, out in the open, as it had been at the dining-room table. That chair had been covered with smooth striped silk but this one was upholstered in some dark plush material, which prickled me, setting off an intimate agitation.

The light in this room was brighter



and the books lining the walls seemed more prying and reproving than the dim dining room, with its landscape paintings and light-absorbing panels.

For a moment, as we moved from one room to the other, I'd had some notion of a story—the sort of story I'd heard of but that few people then got the chance to read—in which the room referred to as a library would turn out to be a bedroom, with soft lights and puffy cushions and all manner of downy coverings. But the room we were in was plainly a library. The reading lights, the books on the glass-enclosed shelves, the invigorating smell of the coffee. Mr. Purvis pulling out a book, riffling through its leaves, finding what he wanted.

"It would be very kind if you would read to me. My eyes are tired in the evenings. You know this book?"

"'A Shropshire Lad.'"

I knew it. In fact, I knew many of the poems by heart.

"And may I ask you please—may I ask you please—not to cross your legs?"

My hands were trembling when I took the book from him.

"Yes," he said. "Yes."

He chose a chair in front of the bookcase, facing me.

"Now—"

"'On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble,'—"

The familiar words and rhythms calmed me down. They took me over. Gradually I began to feel more at peace.

> The gale, it plies the saplings double,
> It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone:
> To-day the Roman and his trouble
> Are ashes under Uricon.

Where was Uricon? Who knew?

It wasn't really that I forgot where I was or whom I was with or in what condition I sat there. But I had come to feel somewhat remote and philosophical. The thought came to me that everybody in the world was naked, in a way. Mr. Purvis was naked, though he wore clothes. We were all sad bare creatures. Shame receded. I just kept turning the pages, reading one poem and then another, then another. Liking the sound of my voice. Until to my surprise and almost to my disappointment—there were still wonderful lines to come—Mr. Purvis interrupted me. He stood up; he sighed.

"Enough, enough," he said. "That was very nice. Thank you. Your country accent is quite suitable. Now it's my bedtime."

"I said I'm sorry."

I handed him the book. He replaced it on the shelf and closed the glass doors. The country accent was news to me. "And I'm afraid it's time to send you home."

He opened another door, into the hallway I had seen so long ago, at the beginning of the evening. I passed in front of him and the door closed behind me. I may have said good night. It is even possible that I thanked him for dinner, and that he spoke to me a few dry words (*not at all, thank you for your company, it was very kind of you, thank you for reading Housman*) in a suddenly tired, old, crumpled, and indifferent voice. He did not lay a hand on me.

The same dimly lit cloakroom. The turquoise dress, my stockings, my slip. Mrs. Winner appeared as I was fastening my stockings. She said only one thing to me, as I was ready to leave. "You forgot your scarf."

And there indeed was the scarf I had knitted in Home Economics class, the only thing I would ever knit in my life. I had come close to abandoning it, in this place.

As I got out of the car, Mrs. Winner said, "Mr. Purvis would like to speak to Nina before he goes to bed. If you would remind her."

But there was no Nina waiting to receive this message. Her bed was made up. Her coat and boots were gone. A few of her clothes were still hanging in the closet.

Beverly and Kay had both gone home for the weekend, so I ran downstairs to see if Beth had any information. "I'm sorry," Beth, whom I never saw sorry about anything, said. "I can't keep track of all your comings and goings." Then, as I turned away, "I've asked you several times not to thump so much on the stairs. I just got Christopher to sleep."

I had not made up my mind what I would say to Nina when I got home. Would I ask her if she, too, was required to be naked in that house—if she had known perfectly well what sort of an evening was waiting for me? Or would I say nothing and wait for her to ask me? And, even then, would I say innocently that I'd eaten Cornish hen and yellow rice, and that it was very good? That I'd read from "A Shropshire Lad"?

Would I just let her wonder?

Now that she was gone, none of this mattered. The focus was shifted. Mrs. Winner phoned after ten o'clock—breaking another of Beth's rules—and when I told her that Nina was not there she said, "Are you sure of that?"

She said the same thing when I told

her that I had no idea where Nina had gone. "Are you sure?"

I asked her not to phone again till morning, because of Beth's rules and the babies' sleep, and she said, "Well. I don't know. This is serious."

When I got up in the morning, the car was parked across the street. Later, Mrs. Winner rang the bell and told Beth that she had been sent to check Nina's room. Even Beth was quelled by Mrs. Winner, who looked all around our room, in the bathroom and the closet, even shaking out a couple of blankets that were folded on the closet floor.

I was still in my pajamas, writing an essay on "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," and drinking Nescafé.

Mrs. Winner said that she had phoned the hospitals, to see if Nina had been taken ill, and that Mr. Purvis himself had gone out to check several other places where she might be.

"If you know anything, it would be better to tell us," she said. "Anything at all."

Then as she started down the stairs she turned and said in a voice that was less menacing, "Is there anybody at the college she was friendly with? Anybody you know?"

I said that I didn't think so.

I had seen Nina at the college only a couple of times. Once, she was walking down the lower corridor of the Arts Building, in the crush between classes, probably on her way to a class of her own. The other time, she was in the cafeteria. Both times she was alone. It was not particularly unusual to be alone when you were hurrying from one class to another but it was a little strange to sit alone with a cup of coffee in the cafeteria at quarter to four in the afternoon, when that space was practically deserted. She sat with a smile on her face, as if to say how pleased, how privileged, she felt to be there, how alert and ready she was to respond to the demands of this life—as soon as she understood what they were.

In the afternoon it began to snow. The car across the street had to move, to make way for the snowplow. When I went into the bathroom and caught the flutter of Nina's kimono on its hook on the door, I finally felt what I had been suppressing—a true fear for Nina. I could see her, disoriented, weeping into her loose hair, wandering around in the snow in her white underwear instead of her camel-hair coat, though I knew perfectly well that she had taken the coat with her.

WASHINGTON AS A SURVEYOR

Lord, I discovered when I discovered love
That day a continent within the mind,
Unstable on the sea, boundaries unlined
Which now I slowly take the measure of.
The coast's determined; the mountains do not move;
Natural harbors and clear springs I find,
Shade trees and fruit trees, everything of its kind—
Even for an empire more resources than enough.
My favorite flowers, besides, some of each,
Yes, and wild animals who stand and stare;
Rivers that run beyond my present reach
The other way, and clouds that glitter in the air.
Love's flag quickly I planted on the beach
While I explored, but the one I love is not there.

—*Elizabeth Bishop*

The phone rang just as I was about to leave for my first class on Monday morning.

"It's me," Nina said, in a rushed warning, but with something like triumph in her voice. "Listen. Please. Could you please do me a favor?"

"Where are you? They're looking for you."

"Who is?"

"Mr. Purvis. Mrs. Winner."

"Well, you're not to tell them. Don't tell them anything. I'm here.

"Where?"

"Ernest's."

"Ernest's?" I said. "*Ernie's*?"

"Sh-h-h. Did anybody there hear you?"

"No."

"Listen, could you please, please get on a bus and bring me the rest of my stuff? I need my shampoo. I need my kimono. I'm going around in Ernest's bathrobe. You should see me—I look like an old woolly brown dog. Is the car still outside?"

I went and looked.

"Yes."

"O.K. then, you should get on the bus and ride up to the college just like you normally do. And then catch the bus downtown. You know where to get off. Dundas and Richmond. Then walk over here. Carlisle Street. Three sixty-three. You know it, don't you?"

"Is Ernie there?"

"No, dum-dum. He's at work. He's got to support us, doesn't he?"

Us? Was Ernie to support Nina and me?

No. *Ernie and Nina.* Ernie was to support Ernie and Nina.

Nina said, "Oh, please. You're the only friend I've got."

I did as directed. To fool Mrs. Winner, I stuffed Nina's things into my satchel. I caught the college bus, then the downtown bus. I got off at Dundas and Richmond and walked west to Carlisle Street. The snowstorm was over, the sky was clear, it was a bright, windless, deep-frozen day. The light hurt my eyes and the fresh snow squeaked under my feet.

Half a block north, on Carlisle Street, I found the house where Ernie had lived with his mother and father and then with his mother and then alone. And now—how was it possible?—with Nina.

The house looked exactly as it had when I had gone there once or twice with my mother. A brick bungalow with a tiny front yard, an arched living-room window with an upper pane of colored glass. Cramped and genteel.

Nina was wrapped, just as she had

said, in a man's brown woolly tasselled dressing gown, with the manly but innocent Ernie smell of shaving cream and Lifebuoy soap.

She grabbed my hands, which were stiff with cold inside my mittens.

"Frozen," she said. "Come on, we'll get them into some warm water."

"They're not *frozen*," I said. "Just freezing."

But she went ahead and helped me off with my things, and took me into the kitchen and ran a bowlful of water, and then as the blood returned painfully to my fingers she told me how Ernest (Ernie) had come to the rooming house on Saturday night. He was bringing a magazine that had a lot of pictures of old ruins and castles and things that he thought might interest me. She got herself out of bed and came downstairs, because, of course, he would not go upstairs, and when he saw how sick she was he said she had to come home with him so that he could look after her. Which he had done so well that her sore throat was practically gone and her fever completely gone. And then they had decided that she would stay here. She would just stay with him and never go back to where she was before.

She seemed unwilling even to mention Mr. Purvis's name.

"But it has to be a big huge secret," she said. "You're the only one to know. Because you're our friend and you're the reason we met."

She was making coffee. "Look up there," she said, waving at the open cupboard. "Look at the way he keeps things. Mugs here. Cups and saucers here. Every cup has got its own hook. Isn't it tidy? The house is just like that all over. I love it.

"You're the reason we met," she repeated. "If we have a baby and it's a girl, we could name it after you."

I held my hands round the mug, still feeling a throb in my fingers. There were African violets on the windowsill over the sink. His mother's order in the cupboards, his mother's houseplants. The big fern was probably still in front of the living-room window, and the doilies on the armchairs. What Nina had said, in regard to herself and Ernie, seemed brazen and—especially when I thought of the Ernie part of it—abundantly distasteful.

"You're going to get married?"

"Well."

"You said if you have a baby."

"Well, you never know, we might have started that without being married," Nina said, ducking her head mischievously.

"With Ernie?" I said. "With *Ernie*?"

"Well, there's *Ernie*," she said. "And then there's Er-*nest*." She hugged the bathrobe around herself. "Might be something happening already, you never know."

"What about Mr. Purvis?"

"What about him?"

"Well, if it's something happening already, couldn't it be his?"

Everything about Nina changed. Her face turned mean and sour. "*Him*," she said with contempt. "What do you want to talk about him for? He never had it in him."

"Oh? What about Gemma?"

"What do you want to talk about the past for? Don't make me sick. That's all dead and gone. It doesn't matter to me and Ernest. We're together now. We're in love now."

In love. With Ernie. Ernest. Now.

"O.K.," I said.

"Sorry I yelled at you. Did I yell? I'm sorry. You're our friend and you brought me my things and I appreciate it. You're Ernest's cousin and you're our family."

She slipped behind me and her fingers darted into my armpits and she began to tickle me, at first lazily and then furiously.

"Aren't you? Aren't you?"

I tried to get free but I couldn't. I went into spasms of suffering laughter and wriggled and cried out and begged her to stop. Which she did, when she had me quite helpless, and both of us were out of breath.

"You're the ticklishest person I ever met," she said.

I had to wait a long time for the bus, stamping my feet on the pavement. When I got to the college, I had missed my second class, as well as the first, and I was late for my work in the cafeteria. I changed into my green cotton uniform in the broom closet and pushed my mop of black hair (the worst hair in the world for showing up in food, the manager had warned me) under a cotton snood.

I was supposed to get the sandwiches and salads out on the shelves before the doors opened for lunch, but now I had

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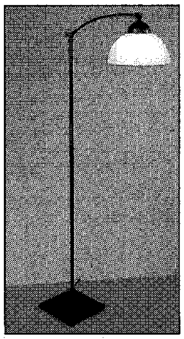
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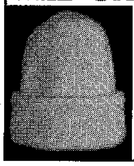
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to do it with an impatient line of people watching me.

I thought of what Beverly and Kay had said, about spoiling my chances with men, marking myself off in the wrong way. How scornful I'd been when they said it, but maybe they'd been right, after all. It appeared that, except in examinations, I got many things wrong.

After I'd finished cleaning up the cafeteria tables, I changed back into my ordinary clothes and went to the college library to work on my essay.

An underground tunnel fed from the Arts Building to the library, and on bulletin boards around the entrance to this tunnel were posted advertisements for movies and restaurants and used bicycles and typewriters, as well as notices for plays and concerts. The Music Department announced that a free recital of songs composed to fit the poems of the English country poets would be presented on a date that had now passed. I had seen this notice before, and did not have to look at it to be reminded of the names: Herrick, Housman, Tennyson. A few steps into the tunnel the lines began to assault me:

On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble.

Had he known? Had he known that I would never think of those lines again without feeling the prickle of the upholstery on my bare haunches? The sticky prickly shame. A far greater shame it seemed now than at the time. He had got me, in spite of myself.

From far, from eve and morning
And yon twelve-winded sky,
The stuff of life to knit me
Blew hither: here am I.

No.

What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what farms are those?

No, never.

White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.

No. No. No.

I would always be reminded of what I had done. What I had agreed to do. Not been forced, not ordered, not even persuaded. Agreed to do.

Nina would know. She would be laughing about it. Not cruelly, but just the way she laughed at so many things. She would always remind me.

Nina and Ernie. In my life from now on.

The college library was a high beautiful space, designed and built and paid for by people who believed that those who sat at its long tables in front of open books—even those who were hungover, sleepy, resentful, and uncomprehending—should have space above them, panels of dark gleaming wood around them, high windows bordered with Latin admonitions through which to look at the sky. For a few years before they went into schoolteaching or business or began to rear children, they should have that. And now it was my turn and I would have it, too.

"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight."

I was writing a good essay. I would probably get an A. I would go on writing essays and getting A's because that was what I could do. The people who awarded scholarships, who built universities and libraries, would continue to dribble out money so that I could do it.

People like Mr. Purvis.

Still, those dribbles, that charity, did not make me amount to anything in their eyes. What I was doing here did not really matter. Somehow I had not known that. Nina knew it now and probably she had always known it. Ernie, too, though he had thought it his duty to pretend otherwise. Mr. Purvis and Mrs. Winner. Even Beth and Kay and Beverly knew that you had to get a footing somewhere else. This was only a game.

And I had thought it was the other way round.

Just as I had made myself believe that it was a challenge with Mr. Purvis and that I had won, or come off equal.

Equal?

Nina did not stay with Ernie for even one week. One day he came home and found her gone. Gone her coat and boots, her lovely clothes and the kimono that I had brought over. Gone her taffy hair and her tickling and the extra warmth of her skin and the little *unh-unhs* when she moved. All gone with no explanation, not a word on paper.

Ernie was not one, however, to shut

himself up and mourn. He said so, when he phoned to tell me the news and check on my availability for Sunday dinner. We climbed the stairs to the Old Chelsea and he commented on the fact that this was our last dinner before the Christmas holidays. He helped me off with my coat and I smelled Nina's smell. Could it still be on his skin?

No. The source was revealed when he passed something to me. Something like a large handkerchief.

"Just put it in your coat pocket," he said.

Not a handkerchief. The texture was sturdier, with a slight ribbing. An undershirt.

"I don't want it around," he said, and by his voice you might have thought that it was just underwear in general that he did not want around, never mind that it was Nina's and smelled of Nina.

He ordered the roast beef, and cut and chewed it with his normal efficiency and polite appetite. I gave him the news from home, which as usual at this time of year consisted of the size of the snowdrifts, the number of blocked roads, the winter havoc that gave us distinction.

After some time, Ernie said, "I went round to his house. But there was nobody in it."

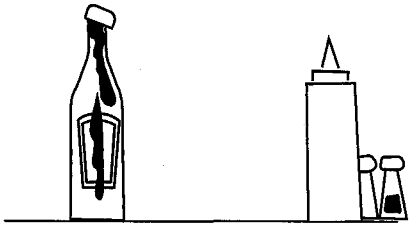
"Whose house?"

"Her uncle's," he said. He knew which house it was, because he and Nina had driven past it, after dark. There was nobody there now, he said. They had packed up and gone.

It had been her choice, after all. "It's a woman's privilege," he said. "Like they say, it's a woman's privilege to change her mind."

His eyes, now that I looked into them, had a dry famished look, and the skin around them was dark and wrinkled. He pursed his mouth, controlling a tremor, then talked on, with an air of trying to see all sides, trying to understand.

"It wasn't the money. It was just that he was old and senile and she has a soft heart. And the fact that he looked after her when her parents were killed."



If I stared for a moment, he didn't notice.

"I wouldn't have objected to us taking him in. I told her I was used to old people. But I guess she didn't want to put that on me.

"It was a shock, all right, when I came home and she was gone. But you just have to roll with the punches. Better not to expect too much. You can't take everything personally."

When I went past the coats on my way to the ladies' room, I got the shirt out of my pocket. I stuffed it in with the used towels.

That day in the library I had been unable to go on with Sir Gawain. I had torn a page from my notebook and picked up my pen and walked out. On the landing outside the library doors there was a pay phone, and beside that hung a phone book. I looked through the phone book and on the piece of paper I wrote two things. They were not phone numbers but addresses.

1648 Henfryn Street.

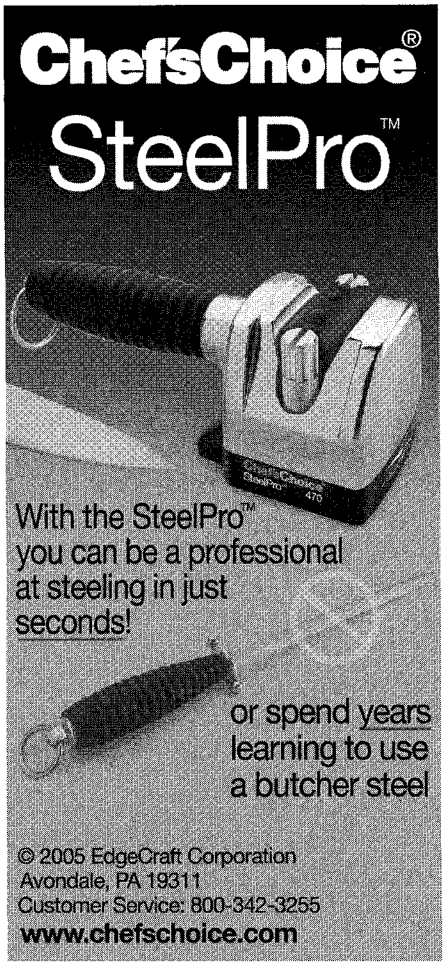
The other address, which I needed only to confirm, was 363 Carlisle Street.

I walked back through the tunnel to the Arts Building and entered the little shop across from the Common Room. I had enough change in my pocket to buy an envelope and a stamp. I tore off the part of the paper with the Carlisle Street address on it and put that scrap into the envelope. I sealed the envelope and on the front of it I wrote the name of Mr. Purvis and the address on Henfryn Street. All in block capitals. Then I licked and fixed the stamp. I think that in those days it would have been a four-cent stamp.

Just outside the shop was a mail chute. I slipped the envelope into it, there in the wide lower corridor of the Arts Building, with people passing me on their way to classes, on their way to have a smoke and maybe a game of bridge in the Common Room.

Most of them on a course, as I was, of getting to know the ways of their own wickedness.

I kept on learning things. I learned that Uricon, the Roman camp, is now Wroxeter, a town on the Severn River. ♦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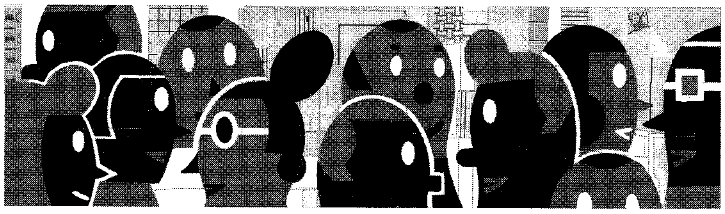

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STRANGE FITS OF PASSION

Wordsworth's revolution.

BY ADAM KIRSCH

Has there ever been a great poet as tempting to laugh at as William Wordsworth? The tradition of mocking him is as old as the tradition of revering him. In 1807, when Wordsworth published "Poems, in Two Volumes," the fashionable reviewers competed in the ingenuity of their scorn. Francis Jeffrey, the critical dictator of the *Edinburgh Review*, declared that "if the printing of such trash as this be not felt as an insult on the public taste, we are afraid it cannot be insulted." Jeffrey remained the chief bane of Wordsworth's career—in 1814, his review of "The Excursion," a nine-thousand-line epic, began with an airy "This will never do"—but he was just one of many who felt the need to cut the poet down to size. "For nearly twenty years," Samuel Taylor Coleridge complained in "Biographia Literaria," Wordsworth's poems "have well-nigh *engrossed* criticism, as the main, if not the only, *butt* of review, magazine, pamphlet, poem, and paragraph."

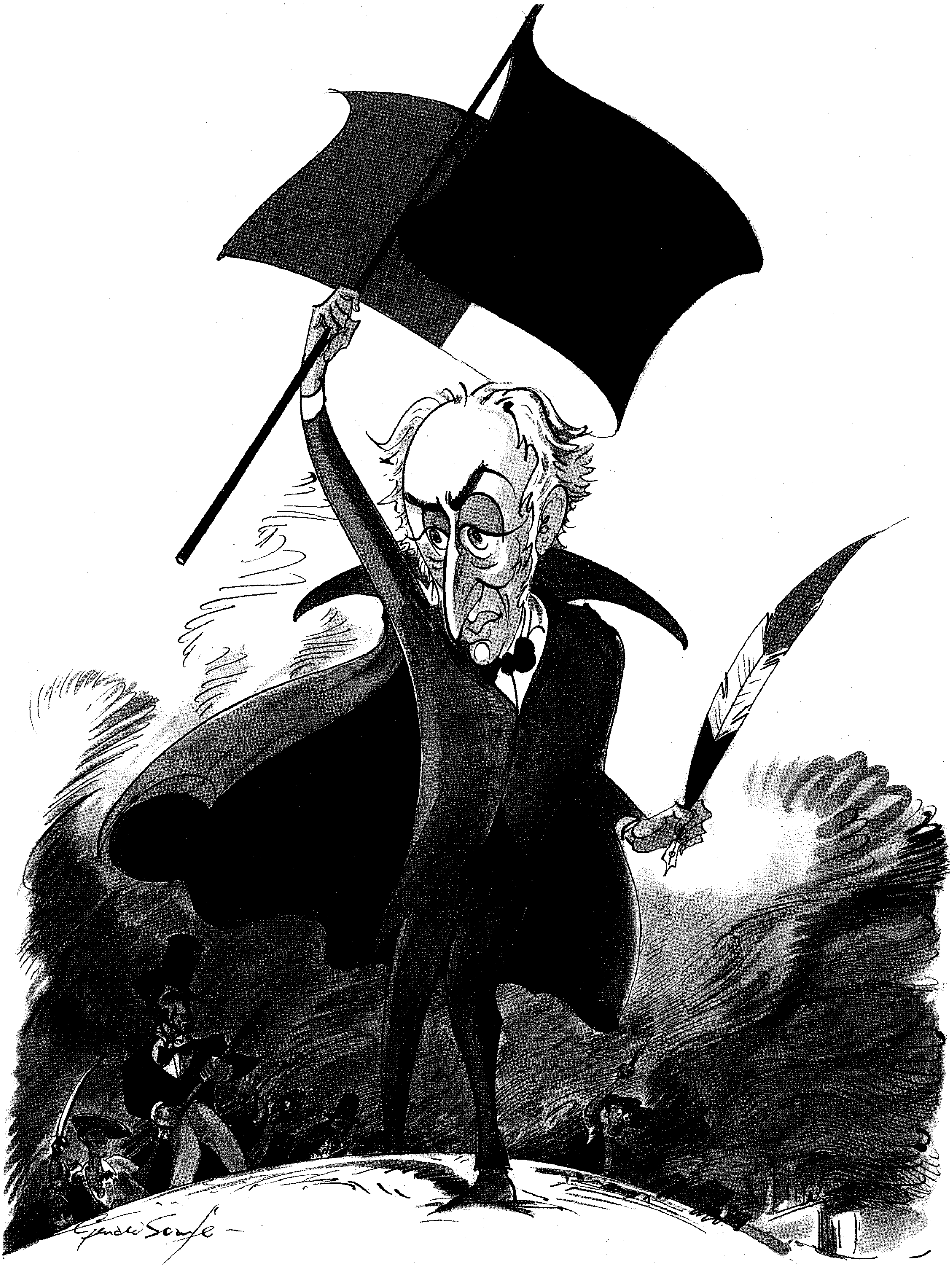
But the urge to make fun of Wordsworth has always been a guilty one. For his first critics, it was a nervous response to the poet's intense seriousness, like the giggling of children during a sermon. What discomfited them was not just the defiant humility of Wordsworth's subjects—an old beggar, a madwoman, a retarded child—but the revolutionary scope of his claims on their behalf. He demanded for the ordinary and the damaged not a grudging pity but the full sympathy that recognizes "that we have all of us one human heart." Wordsworth's faith in the heart, in fact, has something of the paradoxical, frightening absoluteness of the New Testament. He believed that the soul, uncontaminated by wealth and unperverted by extreme poverty, is essentially good; more, that it is part of a universal frame of goodness, which can also be glimpsed in mountains and rivers, animals and plants. Sin and death have no dominion over this goodness, which lies just underneath the surface of things, always ready to receive us:

> 'Tis Nature's law
> That none, the meanest of created things,
> Of forms created the most vile and brute,
> The dullest or most noxious, should exist
> Divorced from good—a spirit and pulse of good,
> A life and soul, to every mode of being
> Inseparably linked.

Poetry, for Wordsworth, was nothing other than the expression in language of this "spirit and pulse." To consider it a mere bourgeois entertainment was to violate its high calling. Wordsworth had no patience with those "who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry." It is because he was so hostile to the idea of poetry as a taste that he could write in a style that his first readers regarded as tasteless. He even came to believe that the neglect or incomprehension of the majority of readers was itself proof that he was on the right path. No more than any prophet could he expect to be honored in his own country. "It is an awful truth," he wrote to his patron Lady Beaumont, "that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of Poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world." If the definition of the avant-garde is that it is validated by contempt, then Wordsworth was the first avant-garde writer in English literature.

The growth of his reputation established what has become the familiar pattern for experimental artists. Initial neglect is compensated for by a cult of admirers, a select few who take special delight in the sense that they alone understand the artist's worth. Coleridge remarked on the apostolic quality of Wordsworth's readers, who were found "chiefly among young men of strong sensibility and meditative minds; and their admiration (inflamed perhaps in some degree by opposition) was distinguished by its intensity, I might almost say, by its *religious* fervor." When these admirers are rich, they see it as their duty to help the artist survive: Wordsworth had no regular employment until he was middle-aged, surviving instead on a small inheritance and the remarkable generosity of his patrons. His Calverts and Beaumonts are the direct ancestors of Yeats's Lady Gregory and Joyce's Harriet Shaw Weaver. Finally, as if overnight, the minority view turns into conventional wisdom, and the object of ridicule becomes a national treasure.

For Wordsworth, this transformation began in the eighteen-thirties. Wordsworth told the young Matthew Arnold that his poetry "had never brought him in enough to buy his shoestrings"; suddenly, he was selling out multivolume sets and cheap editions. In 1843, Queen Victoria named him Poet Laureate. Trainloads of day-trippers, following a vogue for the Lake District that Wordsworth helped create, showed up on the lawn at Rydal Mount to pay their respects. Juliet Barker's new biography, "Wordsworth: A Life" (Ecco; $29.95), is especially good at evoking this phase of Wordsworth's career: the lion in winter, submitting to be petted and gawked at. Barker quotes a letter written by his wife, Mary, in 1847, when the poet was seventy-seven years old: "At this moment, a group of young Tourists are standing before the window (I



A visit to France made Wordsworth an ardent supporter of the Revolution, but his best work came when his ardor started to cool.

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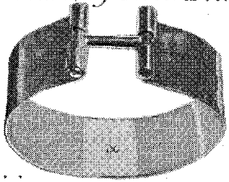

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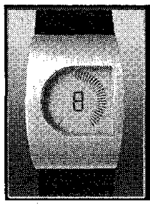

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am writing in the Hall) and Wm reading a newspaper—and on lifting up his head a profound bow greeted him from each."

In that bow, Wordsworth's admirers were doing homage to more than a poet. "I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing," he wrote, and it was his teaching that his readers cherished so highly. His influence on the younger generation of writers was profound; indeed, many of what we now see as the Victorian virtues—earnestness, mature optimism, easy authority—are first incarnated in his poetry. Above all, he offered a doubting generation the example of his confident spiritual health. Wordsworth's faith in the goodness of the universe made a detour around the question of Christ's divinity, which tormented so many of the best minds of the mid-nineteenth century. Instead, he simply affirmed, in the famous words from "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," that "Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her."

One after another, the great Victorians speak of Wordsworth as a doctor of the spirit. Emerson wrote that "he has done more for the sanity of this generation than any other writer"; Ruskin, that "Wordsworth may be trusted as a guide in everything"; Leslie Stephen, that "he seems to me to be the only consoler." His most famous patient was John Stuart Mill, who testified in his "Autobiography" that reading Wordsworth saved him from a nervous breakdown: "What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of."

It has been a long time, however, since we have been in quest of the sort of cure that Wordsworth has to offer. If his first readers turned against him because he was undignified, today we are more likely to turn away from him because he is too dignified. He knows what he knows so surely, so completely, that he cannot think against himself; no poet besides Milton is as devoid of humor. This quality is indispensable to his poetry at its best, but also played a part in its shockingly rapid decline. Wordsworth kept writing almost until his death, in 1850, but virtually all of his lasting poems were written in the ten years after 1797. "Tintern Abbey," "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," the "Lucy" poems, "Michael," "Expostulation and Reply" were written before the poet had turned thirty-five. The works that came later—"The Excursion," "The River Duddon," "Ecclesiastical Sonnets"—have become bywords for tedium.

This is the real quandary of Wordsworth's life, and Juliet Barker's reluctance to address it keeps her very informative biography from becoming truly revealing. It would seem that only a powerful interest in Wordsworth's poetry could draw a biographer to his well-established story, first told by the poet himself in his autobiographical masterpiece "The Prelude," and filled out by a long chain of biographers, including the excellent Stephen Gill, whose biography appeared in 1989. But Barker's comments on Wordsworth's poetry are perfunctory, and she is generally uninterested in the literary dimension of his life. What she brings to the story is a thorough knowledge of Wordsworth's day-to-day activities and an admirable common sense, which allows her to dismiss the wilder speculations with which other biographers have tried to spice up the poet's usually plain existence.

Wordsworth's life, like most lives perhaps, makes for a lopsided narrative; everything exciting that happened to him happened between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. He was born in the Lake District in 1770 to a middle-class family, whose prosperity flowed from his father's work as law agent to the local magnate, James Lowther, Earl of Lonsdale. When John Wordsworth died, in 1783, leaving William and his four siblings orphans, their future suddenly became much more precarious. Lowther owed his employee's estate huge sums, and though money was found to send William to school and then to Cambridge, the whole of his early life was shadowed by the need to recover the debt. The Wordsworth family's endless, Jarndyce-like lawsuit against the hated nobleman—known to his neighbors and tenants as Wicked Jimmy—was not resolved until 1802, when the Earl finally had the good grace to die.

Given the family's cloudy finances, the four Wordsworth sons had to find ways to support themselves, and William's brothers applied themselves to this task with exemplary dedication. Richard Wordsworth became a London lawyer, Christopher the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, John the captain of an East India merchantman. Only William seemed to languish, compiling a mediocre record at university and refusing to prepare for the clergyman's career that awaited him.

Worse still, when he did find a calling, it turned out to be the dangerous one of revolutionary politics. During a trip to France in 1791-92, Wordsworth fell under the idealistic spell of the French Revolution, which was only just beginning to slide into its violent, regicidal phase. Under the tutelage of Michel Beaupuy, a charismatic aristocrat who abandoned his class to join the Revolutionary army (and died a hero's death fighting the Austrians, in 1796), Wordsworth came to share the ecstatic hopefulness of the time. More than any political theory, what seduced the twenty-one-year-old was the emotional climate of Revolutionary France: he "believed," he remembered in "The Prelude," "That a benignant spirit was abroad / Which might not be withstood." Part of his elation, too, had a more private source: during his stay in Orléans, Wordsworth fell in love with a Frenchwoman, Annette Vallon, and fathered an illegitimate daughter with her. (While Wordsworth acknowledged his daughter Caroline, and intermittently helped support her, he saw her and Annette only twice more, on quick visits to France.) By the time he returned to England, in December, 1792, he seemed to have disqualified himself, deliberately and permanently, from conventional bourgeois success.

For most of his early manhood, William Wordsworth looked certain to become the black sheep of his family, rather than its claim to immortality. The turning point came in 1795, when the poet left London to set up housekeeping at Racedown, in Dorset, with his sister, Dorothy. The fact that brother and sister had seldom seen each other since their father's death, when they were sent to live in different places, only made their adult relationship closer. For the rest of their lives, they lived together, the core of an expanding household that came to include William's wife, Mary Hutchinson, her sister Sara, and, at intervals, his friend and collaborator Coleridge.

The remainder of Wordsworth's story can be told, like any other writer's, in publication dates and family milestones. Barker gives an impeccably complete record of these, sticking close to her subject and seldom venturing to provide any wider literary or political context. We see Wordsworth move from Racedown to Alfoxden, then to Dove Cottage, in Grasmere, and finally to Rydal Mount—the sacred addresses that are still sites of literary pilgrimage. He grows close to the brilliant Coleridge, collaborates with him on their reputation-making volume of "Lyrical Ballads," in 1798, and eventually breaks with him, fed up with his neuroses and addictions. He has five children with his beloved Mary, three of whom he buries, to his tremendous grief. And through it all he rises slowly from cult author to national institution.

The problem with Barker's method is that the writing of poems becomes just another of Wordsworth's many activities—paying calls on friends, taking hikes in the mountains, dealing with publishers, and so on—instead of the center and purpose of his existence. This approach cannot do justice to Wordsworth, the poet of "wise passiveness," whose life was largely empty of outward incident. The other Romantic luminaries—the demonic Byron, the angelic Shelley, and the tormented Coleridge—had much more exciting biographies. Wordsworth's story is compelling not as an adventure but as a parable. His emergence as the great, challenging poet of natural sympathy and his subsequent decline into dull institutional benevolence form one of the key instructive dramas of modern poetry. But the drama is mostly internal, and can be approached only through the poetry that was its product and record.

The central event of Wordsworth's life, without which his poetry cannot be fully understood, was the French Revolution. When the Bastille fell, he was a nineteen-year-old idling his way through Cambridge. In the summer of 1790, he took a walking tour through

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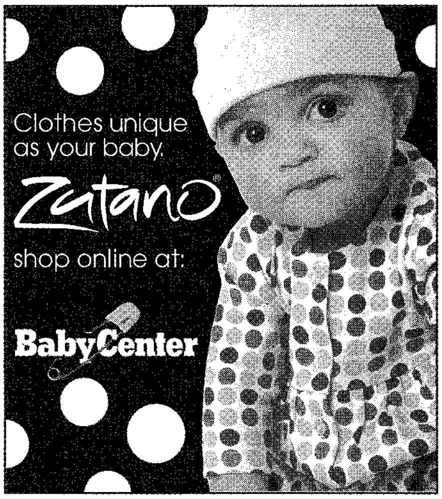

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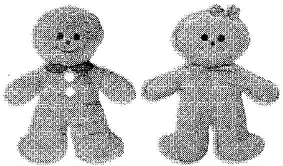

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France and the Alps, where he was first exposed to the world-renewing promise of the Revolution. When he returned to France, the next year, the hopeful scenes he witnessed led him to declare his allegiance to the Revolution and its principles. In "The Prelude," he recalled the experience in some of the most famous lines in English poetry:

> For mighty were the auxiliars which then
> stood
> Upon our side, us who were strong in
> love!
> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very Heaven! O
> times,
> In which the meagre, stale, forbidding
> ways
> Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
> The attraction of a country in romance!

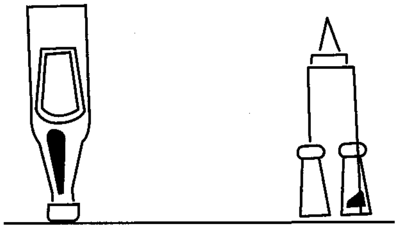
For the next four years, Wordsworth remained an ardent fellow-traveller of the Revolution, at a time when this was not more popular in England than it was to be a Communist in America after 1917. He associated with some of the leading radicals of the day, and wrote, but wisely did not publish, essays and poems that would certainly have got him prosecuted for sedition. In 1797, Wordsworth's house at Alfoxden actually came under government surveillance, after the village began to gossip about newcomers so odd they could only be foreigners: "The French people kept no Servant, but they were Visited by a number of persons, and were frequently out upon the heights most part of the night."

Just as Wordsworth was being denounced as a Frenchman, he was, ironically, in the process of making the final break with his early Jacobinism. "The Prelude," the autobiographical epic that he had completed by 1805 but refused to publish in his lifetime, was written primarily in order to make sense of this apostasy from the revolutionary faith. A kind of bildungsroman, which seems to look back to "Paradise Lost" and forward to "In Search of Lost Time," "The Prelude" is usually remembered as a collection of vivid epiphanies, what the poet named "spots of time": stealing a boat by moonlight, crossing the Alps, climbing above the clouds on Mt. Snowdon. These scenes of natural instruction are presented as critical stages in the "growth of a poet's mind," to use the poem's subtitle. But Wordsworth also cherished them as sources of true wisdom, next to which political reason is merely a dangerous counterfeit. By the late seventeen-nineties, when he had left London and activism behind, his brief career as an ideologue came to seem a betrayal of his real, poetic self. "The Prelude" was written as an act of convalescence from and penance for politics, which he finally comes to see as "a degradation" fortunately "transient":

> I had known
> Too forcibly, too early in my life,
> Visitings of imaginative power
> For this to last: I shook the habit off
> Entirely and for ever, and again
> In Nature's presence stood, as now I
> stand,
> A sensitive being, a *creative* soul.

In time, his evolution was so nearly complete that radicals of the younger generation denounced him as a sellout, especially after he agreed to take a political-patronage job as a tax collector. "Just for a handful of silver he left us," Robert Browning mourned in "The Lost Leader," "Just for a riband to stick in his coat." Even today, Wordsworth's "betrayal" of his early principles continues to damage his reputation among academics. The evidence that his increasing Toryism went hand in hand with the decline of his talent makes it easy to argue, as William Hazlitt did about Wordsworth and the other Lake poets, that "their Jacobin principles indeed gave rise to their Jacobin poetry. Since they gave up the first, their poetical powers have flagged."

But this is to mistake the complexity of Wordsworth's thought, and the motive forces of his best poetry. In fact, Wordsworth's turn away from politics was responsible for the extraordinary flourishing of his poetry after 1797. What animates his best work is his struggle to transcend the radicalism of his youth, to rescue its benevolent impulses while escaping its shallowness and intolerance. In a sense, Wordsworth's intellectual trajectory is similar to that of the American Trotskyists of the nineteen-thirties, who became the liberal anti-Communists of the nineteen-fifties. Like them, Wordsworth found his revolutionary hopes betrayed by history—the Terror of Robespierre and the rise of Bonaparte. His eloquent hatred of Napoleon, like a later generation's hatred of Stalin, came from his realization that he had wagered his highest hopes on a bloody fraud. Returning to France in 1802, after ten years of terror and war, he saw only the corpse of a revolution:



> When faith was pledged to new-born
> Liberty:
> A homeless sound of joy was in the sky:
> From hour to hour the antiquated Earth
> Beat like the heart of Man: songs,
> garlands, mirth,
> Banners, and happy faces, far and nigh!
> And now, sole register that these things
> were,
> Two solitary greetings have I heard,
> "*Good morrow, Citizen!*" a hollow
> word,
> As if a dead man spake it!

Though little written evidence survives from the early seventeen-nineties, what does remain, and what Wordsworth himself tells us in "The Prelude," suggests that he was a doctrinaire ideologue, certain that no one could oppose the Revolution "Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud, / Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved, / Hater perverse of equity and truth." By the time Napoleon fell, however, he had convinced himself of another, equally ironclad set of principles: that the lower classes were not ready to be trusted with political power, that only tradition and hierarchy could insure social peace.

Even then, Wordsworth was not indifferent to the plight of the poor; he remained an advocate of educational reform and an opponent of the workhouse. But by 1814 he had developed the narrow certitude that makes "The Excursion," the poem he intended as his moral testament, so exasperating. In the central dialogue of that book, the embittered Solitary—a Jacobin turned misanthrope by the failure of the French Revolution—is hectored into submission by the self-righteous Wanderer, who knows that the answer to every problem can be found in pious resignation:

> One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists—one only; an assured belief

That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power;
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good.

JONNY COHEN

"Next."

But between Wordsworth's early principles and his late principles came a period of about ten years when he had no firm principles, only questions and intuitions; and it was from these that his great poetry was born. If Wordsworth survives as a living possibility for today's readers and poets—and he should—it is thanks not to his teaching but to his use of verse as a medium for introspection and self-questioning. No poet before him paid such close attention to the way the mind actually works, the odd jumps that connect our ideas and perceptions.

Take "Strange fits of passion have I known," one of the weird and moving series known as the "Lucy" poems. The important thing about Lucy, whom the poet treats at once as a child, sister, and lover, is not whether she was modelled on a real person, or what she suggests about Wordsworth's feelings for Dorothy. (Barker, with her customary good sense, dismisses the modern critical speculation that the "Lucy" poems are a clue to incest: "The post-Freudian world is incapable of believing that there could be anything innocent about intense sibling affection.") The poem is not really about Lucy at all but about the way the poet's love leads him beyond logic. When the moon disappears from sight behind Lucy's cottage, he immediately fears that it is an omen:

What fond and wayward thoughts will
slide
Into a Lover's head!
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"

There is no reason for the Lover to connect the moon with Lucy's death; but this is just the kind of "fond and wayward thought" that makes up so much of our inner lives, and which no one before Wordsworth had discovered as a subject for poetry. This discovery, grounded in a deep compassion for human frailty, is what gives Wordsworth's best narrative poems their moving simplicity. There is Timothy, in "The Childless Father," who shuts his front door and thinks, "The key I must take, for my Ellen is dead"; there is Michael, the old shepherd who kept going back to the sheepfold he started to build with his vanished son, but "never lifted up a single stone"; there is the child in "Anecdote for Fathers," who insists that he does not like his new house because it has a weathercock on the roof.

In learning to listen to these quiet, undefended truths, Wordsworth came to trust them more than the Truth Militant he saw in France. There grew up in him a feeling that became a conviction: that the heart partakes of the holiness of Nature, that it needs sympathetic attention, not ideological correction. Finally, he tried to make this insight the basis for a quasi religion, in which a benevolent Nature takes the place of a loving God. In his most elevated rhetorical passages, especially in "The Prelude," he often writes as though setting forth a metaphysical proposition that demands intellectual assent: "Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows / Like harmony in music; there is a dark / Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles / Discordant elements."

But this is not the kind of statement that can be argued for or against, any more than Keats's "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." It is the spontaneous praise uttered by a man who has had a certain experience, and will be persuasive only if the poet has shared that experience with the reader.

In his great poems, Wordsworth does exactly that. His downfall was that, convinced as he was of the truths that blossomed from his experience, he finally could not imagine that other people might need convincing. As he grew older, he tended to view all criticism of his poetry as a sign of moral turpitude, and was abetted in this by the obvious flippancy of so many of his detractors. In the uselessly combative essay he included in the 1815 edition of his poems, designed as a counterblast to Jeffrey and all his other critics, he consoled himself with the thought that "there are select Spirits for whom it is ordained that their fame shall be in the world an existence like that of Virtue, which owes its being to the struggles it makes, and its vigour to the enemies whom it provokes."

This is not just unattractive; it courts the very ridicule it is intended to silence. We do not come to art for virtue, though we may come to it for wisdom. The difference is the one between "Resolution and Independence," in which the poet's moral crisis is beautifully enacted and resolved, and the "Ode to Duty," in which his moral instruction is handed down from on high. The instruction, which the Victorians so valued, sounds false to us now, full of unearned confidence about the benevolence of man and nature. But the intrepidity with which Wordsworth explored his own inner life and the generosity with which he shared it remain more than convincing: even now, they continue to define the highest aspirations of modern poetry. ♦

BOOKS

EVERYBODY'S AN EXPERT

Putting predictions to the test.

BY LOUIS MENAND

Prediction is one of the pleasures of life. Conversation would wither without it. "It won't last. She'll dump him in a month." If you're wrong, no one will call you on it, because being right or wrong isn't really the point. The point is that you think he's not worthy of her, and the prediction is just a way of enhancing your judgment with a pleasant prevision of doom. Unless you're putting money on it, nothing is at stake except your reputation for wisdom in matters of the heart. If a month goes by and they're still together, the deadline can be extended without penalty. "She'll leave him, trust me. It's only a matter of time." They get married: "Funny things happen. You never know." You still weren't *wrong*. Either the marriage is a bad one—you erred in the right direction—or you got beaten by a low-probability outcome.

It is the somewhat gratifying lesson of Philip Tetlock's new book, "Expert Political Judgment: How Good Is It? How Can We Know?" (Princeton; $35), that people who make prediction their business—people who appear as experts on television, get quoted in newspaper articles, advise governments and businesses, and participate in punditry roundtables—are no better than the rest of us. When they're wrong, they're rarely held accountable, and they rarely admit it, either. They insist that they were just off on timing, or blindsided by an improbable event, or almost right, or wrong for the right reasons. They have the same repertoire of self-justifications that everyone has, and are no more inclined than anyone else to revise their beliefs about the way the world works, or ought to work, just because they made a mistake. No one is paying you for your gratuitous opinions about other people, but the experts are being paid, and Tetlock claims that the better known and more frequently quoted they are, the less reliable their guesses about the future are likely to be. The accuracy of an expert's predictions actually has an inverse relationship to his or her self-confidence, renown, and, beyond a certain point, depth of knowledge. People who follow current events by reading the papers and newsmagazines regularly can guess what is likely to happen about as accurately as the specialists whom the papers quote. Our system of expertise is completely inside out: it rewards bad judgments over good ones.

"Expert Political Judgment" is not a work of media criticism. Tetlock is a psychologist—he teaches at Berkeley—and his conclusions are based on a long-term study that he began twenty years ago. He picked two hundred and eighty-four people who made their living "commenting or offering advice on political and economic trends," and he started asking them to assess the probability that various things would or would not come to pass, both in the areas of the world in which they specialized and in areas about which they were not expert. Would there be a nonviolent end to apartheid in South Africa? Would Gorbachev be ousted in a coup? Would the United States go to war in the Persian Gulf? Would Canada disintegrate? (Many experts believed that it would, on the ground that Quebec would succeed in seceding.) And so on. By the end of the study, in 2003, the experts had made 82,361 forecasts. Tetlock also asked questions designed to determine how they reached their judgments, how they reacted when their predictions proved to be wrong, how they evaluated new information that did not support their views, and how they assessed the probability that rival theories and predictions were accurate.

Tetlock got a statistical handle on his task by putting most of the forecasting questions into a "three possible futures" form. The respondents were asked to rate the probability of three alternative outcomes: the persistence of the status quo, more of something (political freedom, economic growth), or less of something (repression, recession). And he measured his experts on two dimensions: how good they were at guessing probabilities (did all the things they said had an x per cent chance of happening happen x per cent of the time?), and how accurate they were at predicting specific outcomes. The results were unimpressive. On the first scale, the experts performed worse than they would have if they had simply assigned an equal probability to all three outcomes—if they had given each possible future a thirty-three-per-cent chance of occurring. Human beings who spend their lives studying the state of the world, in other words, are poorer forecasters than dart-throwing monkeys, who would have distributed their picks evenly over the three choices.

Tetlock also found that specialists are not significantly more reliable than non-specialists in guessing what is going to happen in the region they study. Knowing a little might make someone a more reliable forecaster, but Tetlock found that knowing a lot can actually make a person less reliable. "We reach the point of diminishing marginal predictive returns for knowledge disconcertingly quickly," he reports. "In this age of academic hyperspecialization, there is no reason for supposing that contributors to top journals—distinguished political scientists, area study specialists, economists, and so on—are any better than journalists or attentive readers of the New York *Times* in 'reading' emerging situations." And the more famous the forecaster the more overblown the forecasts. "Experts in demand," Tetlock says, "were more overconfident than their colleagues who eked out existences far from the limelight."

People who are not experts in the psychology of expertise are likely (I predict) to find Tetlock's results a surprise and a matter for concern. For psychologists, though, nothing could be less surprising. "Expert Political Judgment" is just one of more than a hundred studies that have pitted experts against statistical or actuarial formulas, and in almost all of those studies the people either do no better than the formulas or do worse. In one study, college counsellors were given information about a group of high-school students and asked to predict their freshman grades in college. The counsellors had access to test scores, grades, the results of personality and vocational tests, and personal statements from the students, whom they were also permitted to interview. Predictions that were produced by a formula using just test scores and grades were more accurate. There are also many studies showing that expertise and experience do not make someone a better reader of the evidence. In one, data from a test used to diagnose brain damage were given to a group of clinical psychologists and their secretaries. The psychologists' diagnoses were no better than the secretaries'.

Experts can fall in love with their own scenarios.

The experts' trouble in Tetlock's study is exactly the trouble that all human beings have: we fall in love with our hunches, and we really, really hate to be wrong. Tetlock describes an experiment that he witnessed thirty years ago in a Yale classroom. A rat was put in a T-shaped maze. Food was placed in either the right or the left transept of the T in a random sequence such that, over the long run, the food was on the left sixty per cent of the time and on the right forty per cent. Neither the students nor (needless to say) the rat was told these frequencies. The students were asked to predict on which side of the T the food would appear each time. The rat eventually figured out that the food was on the left side more often than the right, and it therefore nearly always went to the left, scoring roughly sixty per cent—D, but a passing grade. The students looked for patterns of left-right placement, and ended up scoring only fifty-two per cent, an F. The rat, having no reputation to begin with, was not embarrassed about being wrong two out of every five tries. But Yale students, who do have reputations, searched for a hidden order in the sequence. They couldn't deal with forty-per-cent error, so they ended up with almost fifty-per-cent error.

The expert-prediction game is not much different. When television pundits make predictions, the more ingenious their forecasts the greater their cachet. An arresting new prediction means that the expert has discovered a set of interlocking causes that no one else has spotted, and that could lead to an outcome that the conventional wisdom is ignoring. On shows like "The McLaughlin Group," these experts never lose their reputations, or their jobs, because long shots are their business. More serious commentators differ from the pundits only in the degree of showmanship. These serious experts—the think tankers and area-studies professors—are not entirely out to entertain, but they are a little out to entertain, and both their status as experts and their appeal as performers require them to predict futures that are not obvious to the viewer. The producer of the show does not want you and me to sit there listening to an expert and thinking, I could have said that. The expert also suffers from knowing too much: the more facts an expert has, the more information is available to be enlisted in support of his or her pet theories, and the more chains of causation he or she can find beguiling. This helps explain why specialists fail to outguess non-specialists. The odds tend to be with the obvious.

Tetlock's experts were also no different from the rest of us when it came to learning from their mistakes. Most people tend to dismiss new information that doesn't fit with what they already believe. Tetlock found that his experts used a double standard: they were much tougher in assessing the validity of information that undercut their theory than they were in crediting information that supported it. The same deficiency leads liberals to read only *The Nation* and conservatives to read only *National Review*. We are not natural falsificationists: we would rather find more reasons for believing what we already believe than look for reasons that we might be wrong. In the terms of Karl Popper's famous example, to verify our intuition that all swans are white we look for lots more white swans, when what we should really be looking for is one black swan.

Also, people tend to see the future as indeterminate and the past as inevitable. If you look backward, the dots that lead up to Hitler or the fall of the Soviet Union or the attacks on September 11th all connect. If you look forward, it's just a random scatter of dots, many potential chains of causation leading to many possible outcomes. We have no idea today how tomorrow's invasion of a foreign land is going to go; after the invasion, we can actually persuade ourselves that we knew all along. The result seems inevitable, and therefore predictable. Tetlock found that, consistent with this asymmetry, experts routinely misremembered the degree of probability they had assigned to an event after it came to pass. They claimed to have predicted what happened with a higher degree of certainty than, according to the record, they really did. When this was pointed out to them, by Tetlock's researchers, they sometimes became defensive.

And, like most of us, experts violate a fundamental rule of probabilities by tending to find scenarios with more variables more likely. If a prediction needs two independent things to happen in order for it to be true, its probability is the product of the probability of each of the things it depends on. If there is a one-in-three chance of *x* and a one-in-four chance of *y*, the probability of both *x* and *y* occurring is one in twelve. But we often feel instinctively that if the two events "fit together" in some scenario the chance of both is greater, not less. The classic "Linda problem" is an analogous case. In this experiment, subjects are told, "Linda is thirty-one years old, single, outspoken, and very bright. She majored in philosophy. As a student, she was deeply concerned with issues of discrimination and social justice and also participated in antinuclear demonstrations." They are then asked to rank the probability of several possible descriptions of Linda today. Two of them are "bank teller" and "bank teller and active in the feminist movement." People rank the second description higher than the first, even though, logically, its likelihood is smaller, because it requires two things to be true—that Linda is a bank teller and that Linda is an active feminist—rather than one.

Plausible detail makes us believers. When subjects were given a choice between an insurance policy that covered hospitalization for any reason and a policy that covered hospitalization for all accidents and diseases, they were willing to pay a higher premium for the second policy, because the added detail gave them a more vivid picture of the circumstances in which it might be needed. In 1982, an experiment was done with professional forecasters and planners. One group was asked to assess the probability of "a complete suspension of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, sometime in 1983," and another group was asked to assess the probability of "a Russian invasion of Poland, and a complete suspension of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, sometime in 1983." The experts judged the second scenario more likely than the first, even though it required two separate events to occur. They were seduced by the detail.

It was no news to Tetlock, therefore, that experts got beaten by formulas. But he does believe that he discovered something about why some people make better forecasters than other people. It has to do not with what the experts believe but with the way they think. Tetlock uses Isaiah Berlin's metaphor from Archilochus, from his essay on Tolstoy, "The Hedgehog and the Fox," to illustrate the difference. He says:

> Low scorers look like hedgehogs: thinkers who "know one big thing," aggressively extend the explanatory reach of that one big thing into new domains, display bristly impatience with those who "do not get it," and express considerable confidence that they are already pretty proficient forecasters, at least in the long term. High scorers look like foxes: thinkers who know many small things (tricks of their trade), are skeptical of grand schemes, see explanation and prediction not as deductive exercises but rather as exercises in flexible "ad hocery" that require stitching together diverse sources of information, and are rather diffident about their own forecasting prowess.

A hedgehog is a person who sees international affairs to be ultimately determined by a single bottom-line force: balance-of-power considerations, or the clash of civilizations, or globalization and the spread of free markets. A hedgehog is the kind of person who holds a great-man theory of history, according to which the Cold War does not end if there is no Ronald Reagan. Or he or she might adhere to the "actor-dispensability thesis," according to which Soviet Communism was doomed no matter what. Whatever it is, the big idea, and that idea alone, dictates the probable outcome of events. For the hedgehog, therefore, predictions that fail are only "off on timing," or are "almost right," derailed by an unforeseeable accident. There are always little swerves in the short run, but the long run irons them out.

Foxes, on the other hand, don't see a single determining explanation in history. They tend, Tetlock says, "to see the world as a shifting mixture of self-fulfilling and self-negating prophecies: self-fulfilling ones in which success breeds success, and failure, failure but only up to a point, and then self-negating prophecies kick in as people recognize that things have gone too far."

Tetlock did not find, in his sample, any significant correlation between how experts think and what their politics are. His hedgehogs were liberal as well as conservative, and the same with his foxes. (Hedgehogs were, of course, more likely to be extreme politically, whether rightist or leftist.) He also did not find that his foxes scored higher because they were more cautious—that their appreciation of complexity made them less likely to offer firm predictions. Unlike hedgehogs, who actually performed worse in areas in which they specialized, foxes enjoyed a modest benefit from expertise. Hedgehogs routinely over-predicted: twenty per cent of the outcomes that hedgehogs claimed were impossible or nearly impossible came to pass, versus ten per cent for the foxes. More than thirty per cent of the outcomes that hedgehogs thought were sure or near-sure did not, against twenty per cent for foxes.

The upside of being a hedgehog, though, is that when you're right you can be really and spectacularly right. Great scientists, for example, are often hedgehogs. They value parsimony, the simpler solution over the more complex. In world affairs, parsimony may be a liability—but, even there, there can be traps in the kind of highly integrative thinking that is characteristic of foxes. Elsewhere, Tetlock has published an analysis of the political reasoning of Winston Churchill. Churchill was not a man who let contradictory information interfere with his idées fixes. This led him to make the wrong prediction about Indian independence, which he opposed. But it led him to be right about Hitler. He was never distracted by the contingencies that might combine to make the elimination of Hitler unnecessary.

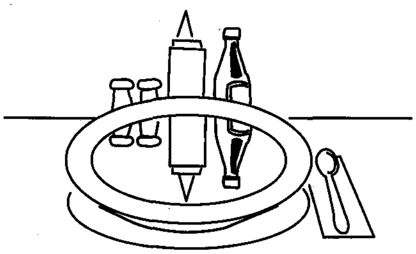
Tetlock also has an unscientific point to make, which is that "we as a society would be better off if participants in policy debates stated their beliefs in testable forms"—that is, as probabilities—"monitored their forecasting performance, and honored their reputational bets." He thinks that we're suffering from our primitive attraction to deterministic, overconfident hedgehogs. It's true that the only thing the electronic media like better than a hedgehog is two hedgehogs who don't agree. Tetlock notes, sadly, a point that Richard Posner has made about these kinds of public intellectuals, which is that most of them are dealing in "solidarity" goods, not "credence" goods. Their analyses and predictions are tailored to make their ideological brethren feel good—more white swans for the white-swan camp. A prediction, in this context, is just an exclamation point added to an analysis. Liberals want to hear that whatever conservatives are up to is bound to go badly; when the argument gets more nuanced, they change the channel. On radio and television and the editorial page, the line between expertise and advocacy is very blurry, and pundits behave exactly the way Tetlock says they will. Bush Administration loyalists say that their predictions about postwar Iraq were correct, just a little off on timing; pro-invasion liberals who are now trying to dissociate themselves from an adventure gone bad insist that though they may have sounded a false alarm, they erred "in the right direction"—not really a mistake at all.

The same blurring characterizes professional forecasters as well. The predictions on cable news commentary shows do not have life-and-death side effects, but the predictions of people in the C.I.A. and the Pentagon plainly do. It's possible that the psychologists have something to teach those people, and, no doubt, psychologists are consulted. Still, the suggestion that we can improve expert judgment by applying the lessons of cognitive science and probability theory belongs to the abiding modern American faith in expertise. As a professional, Tetlock is, after all, an expert, and he would like to believe in expertise. So he is distressed that political forecasters turn out to be as unreliable as the psychological literature predicted, but heartened to think that there might be a way of raising the standard. The hope for a little more accountability is hard to dissent from. It would be nice if there were fewer partisans on television disguised as "analysts" and "experts" (and who would not want to see more foxes?). But the best lesson of Tetlock's book may be the one that he seems most reluctant to draw: Think for yourself. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Mother's Milk, *by Edward St. Aubyn (Open City; $23).* This slim novel centers on Patrick Melrose, a London barrister whose toxic childhood and protracted adolescence were chronicled in St. Aubyn's "Some Hope" trilogy. Patrick now has a wife and two young sons, but he remains subject to the whims of his senile mother. She has donated the house where he grew up, in Provence, for use as a New Age retreat, leaving Patrick and his dependents to spend holidays there as increasingly unwelcome guests. Narrated by turns from the perspectives of Patrick, his wife, and their elder son, the novel vividly captures how the family members' roles shift with the birth of the second son and the deterioration of Patrick's mother. The book's structure, however, is overschematic, and St. Aubyn's satiric barbs, although as deadly as ever, are wasted on easy targets—like uncouth Americans and New Age hypocrites.

The Darwin Conspiracy, *by John Darnton (Knopf; $24.95).* Darnton's latest novel on scientific themes follows Hugh Kellem, an anthropologist whose study of Darwin's finches leads him to Cambridge, where, listlessly searching through Darwin's papers for a thesis topic, he stumbles upon a secret diary kept by Darwin's second daughter, Lizzie. Darnton interweaves Hugh's investigation with excerpts from Lizzie's writings and with flashbacks to Darwin's voyage aboard the Beagle. Both Darwin's daughter and the modern researcher become obsessed with the twenty-two-year gestation period between the voyage and Darwin's publication of his theory. The solution to the mystery manages to be not only fussily elaborate but fundamentally simplistic, and it involves too many dark hints and convenient coincidences. Still, Darnton has a good feel for both the Victorian era and the modern scientific milieu.



The Lost Painting, *by Jonathan Harr (Random House; $24.95).* Ten years after his best-selling environmental exposé, "A Civil Action," Harr brings his narrative talents to the story of how a Caravaggio painting, "The Taking of Christ," was identified after centuries of obscurity. He follows a precocious graduate student into the archives of a crumbling palazzo, an Italian restorer moored in Ireland, and a patrician British scholar, each of whom contributes a piece of the puzzle. Harr's attempt to spin their search into a gripping thriller yields mixed results. Despite the book's tone of hushed excitement, its long inventory of detail sometimes acquires an archival feel, and its ostensible centerpieces—the drinking, brawling Caravaggio and his elusive painting—make only fleeting appearances. Harr excels, however, at anatomizing the minds of his sleuths, and gets good mileage out of the various eccentrics encountered along the way.

Mirror to America, *by John Hope Franklin (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* At the age of ninety, Franklin recounts the story of his rise from a childhood in Oklahoma to a career as a pioneering African-American historian, whose work on the history of segregation formed part of the N.A.A.C.P.'s brief in Brown v. Board of Education. The journey is shadowed at every stage by episodes of casual bigotry and worse. He was threatened by a would-be lynch mob while surveying the economic conditions of black cotton farmers in Depression-era Mississippi; as he corrected the galleys of his groundbreaking work "From Slavery to Freedom," in 1947, he learned that his older brother, shattered by the experience of racism in the segregated military, "had either fallen or jumped" from a hotel window; and, after he hosted a dinner on the eve of receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom, a white woman gave him a numbered ticket and asked him to retrieve her coat.

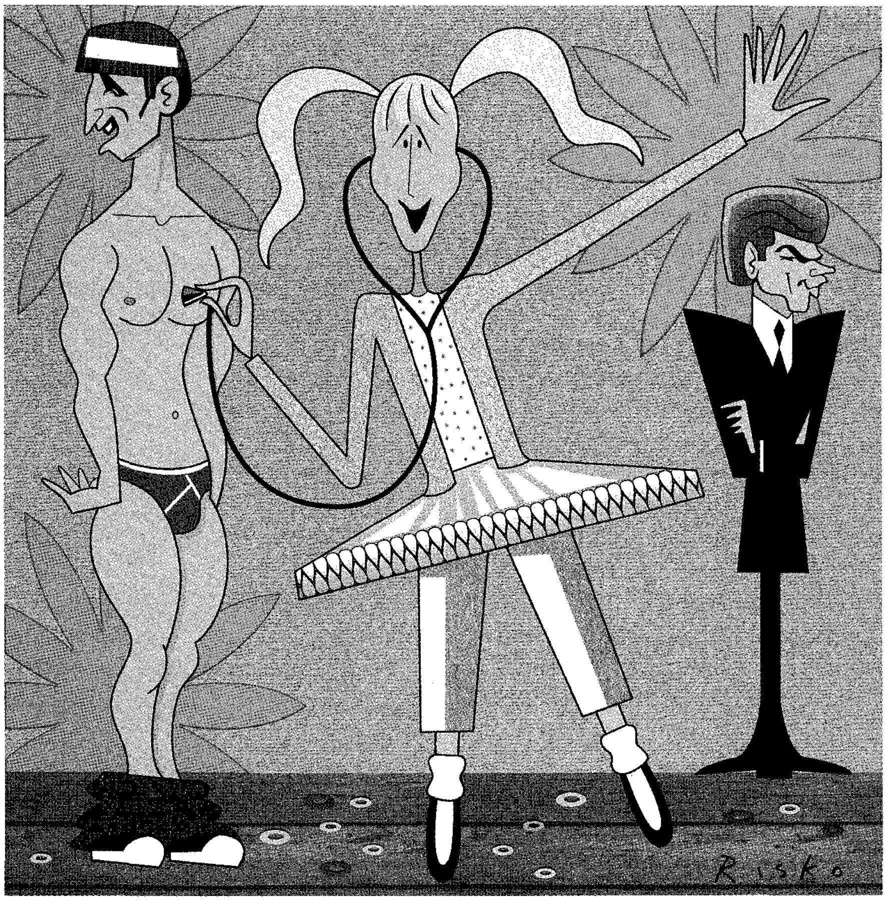
THE THEATRE

BLEAK HOUSE

A child's fantasy life and a failed inventor Off Broadway.

BY JOHN LAHR

In the theatrical game of hide-and-seek, one of the most exciting things to see flushed out into the open is the unconscious life of *Homo sapiens*. It's a hard thing to represent onstage, which is why playwrights often resort to conveying it through large and startling stage pictures. The title of Noah Haidle's exhilarating "Mr. Marmalade" (well directed by Michael Greif, at the Laura Pels) refers to the imaginary friend of a lively but neglected four-year-old called Lucy (Mamie Gummer, making her impressive Off Broadway début). As played by the compelling Michael C. Hall, Mr. Marmalade is a buttoned-down, briefcase-toting simulacrum, one suspects, of Lucy's absent father. All the roles here are performed by adults, a trope that both refers implicitly to the child in all of us and shows, from the child's perspective, the monumentality of the real as well as the fantastical.



Mamie Gummer as a precocious four-year-old in Noah Haidle's "Mr. Marmalade."

Although grownups occasionally intrude on Lucy's busy world—she's the only child of a divorced mother in suburban New Jersey—the events of the play mainly concern the games of tea party, doctor, and house, with which she peoples her solitude. Lucy's brightness, however, is also a sort of shadow play; it throws oblique but harrowing light on the offstage desolation she endures. A child's "liveliness and color," the child psychologist D. W. Winnicott wrote, is often a response to his or her mother's dark depression, and Haidle's playful and punishing play subtly traps this sleight of mind. Even before we meet Lucy's mother (Virginia Louise Smith)—Sookie is her appropriately girlish name—we know, from Lucy's first quarrel with Mr. Marmalade, something of the family landscape. "It's so good to be home," Mr. Marmalade says. Lucy replies, "You haven't touched me in weeks. . . . You're at the office until the dead of night. And when you are home you barely even look at me." The issue here, of course, is central to Lucy's problem and to the play. Nobody seems to look at Lucy—not her babysitter, not her father, not her mother's new "friend," not even her mother. When Sookie makes the first of her few brief appearances in her daughter's life, she comes for advice on what dress she should wear on a date. "How do I look? . . . Just fine or pretty good?" she asks. "Just fine," Lucy says, to which her mother replies, "Thank you for your support, Lucy." Instead of providing support for her daughter, Sookie manipulates Lucy into the impossible and terrifying position of being the adult. Lucy, the play demonstrates, is not so much a child as a prop to her mother's fragile ego.

Lucy's pretensions to adulthood are alternately hilarious and heartbreaking. She uses a hairbrush as a cell phone. "You're breaking up," she says in a call to Mr. Marmalade, signing off with "*Ciao.*" When she plays house with a suicidal five-year-old, Larry (Pablo Schreiber), who has arrived with her babysitter's boyfriend, she greets him in her mother's dress and high heels. "I have some very big news, dear," she says. "I'm pregnant." Larry is happy to hear it, but soon isn't feeling well. "I think I might have a fever," he says. "I think it might be my uterus." The arrival of Larry's own imaginary friends—a Cactus and a Sunflower—spoils the children's bourgeois idyll. ("Larry is a banker. He makes a very good salary and great benefits," Lucy tells the unimpressed plants.) The Cactus and the Sunflower argue. A food fight ensues, and, before you can say Ronald Firbank, Larry and all his imaginaries are banished. "What about the baby?" he says. "Shouldn't we stay together for the sake of the baby?" "It's not even yours," Lucy tells him. "That's some cold shit," the Cactus observes.

Things can get very cold in Lucy's universe. Mr. Marmalade, it seems, is prone to mood swings and violence, fuelled by his cocaine habit. At one point, Lucy threatens to switch her allegiance to Larry. Mr. Marmalade promises to cut back on his work, to go into rehab. "Just don't leave me," he pleads. When Lucy stonewalls him, he curses her, hits her in the face, and spits on her. Larry enters at this point and metes out some rough justice on Mr. Marmalade. Later, however, Lucy's fantasy of annihilation is replaced by an Oedipal fantasy of repair. Mr. Marmalade apologizes, and then, with a snap of his fingers, produces roses, candelabras, and champagne. He promises Lucy a white picket fence, babies, a trip to Mexico, and eternal fidelity. By the end of the play, however, he has reverted to his brutal self, driving her to more and more desperate measures. When Sookie and her date finally come home and survey the mess that Lucy has made of herself and the house, Sookie says, "I don't know what gets into you sometimes." "Me, neither," Lucy replies.

What's got into Lucy, through the alchemy of Haidle's scintillating style, is her parents' unmooring aggression. She is a container of all their hostilities. Left alone yet again by her mother, Lucy goes outside to play dodgeball with Larry. "How do I look?" she asks Bradley (David Costabile), another imaginary friend. "You look beautiful," he says. The only confirmation of her identity that Lucy gets is in fantasy. At the finale, Allen Moyer's neutral set opens upstage to reveal the vivid, suprarealistic exterior of Lucy's modest family house and its luminous patch of emerald-green lawn. In the background—a fleeting snapshot of suburban normality—Lucy can be seen noisily jumping and evading the ball. But we're left staring at the foreground, the vacant interior of her home, whose brooding silence evokes the emptiness of a murdered soul.

Rinne Groff's "The Ruby Sunrise" (directed by Oskar Eustis, at the Public) concerns itself with visions of an altogether different kind. The eponymous Ruby is a tomboyish young inventor (the excellent Marin Ireland), who is experimenting with a newfangled extension of the radio, something she calls "television," an idea based on light frequencies which first comes to her as she is plowing her father's farm, in Indiana, in 1927. Her obsession, which she shares with Henry (Patch Darragh), a young man who begins as her skeptical helper and ends up as her lover, is that television is going to improve democracy. "Television's gonna change people. Make a whole different world where people can see the world right in their own homes," Ruby tells him. Henry proposes marriage just as she's approaching a breakthrough, and the generator on which she's working explodes. When the smoke clears, her first words are "My baby." On that cliffhanger—is she referring to Henry, to her invention, or to a child-to-be?—the fascinating first part ends.

The second part takes place in a New York City television studio in 1952 and revolves around Ruby's illegitimate daughter, Lulu (Maggie Siff), who has grown up to be a brilliant TV script coördinator with a progressive vision of her own. "There are stories to tell about the little guy," she tells the promising TV writer Tad Rose (Jason Butler Harner), whom she coaxes first into romance and then into reënacting her family history onscreen, an enterprise that turns out to be as blighted as her mother's stab at immortality was. We watch as Ruby's story is diluted by corporate interests: first, a blacklisted actress is rejected for the part, and then the facts of Ruby's unique life are bowdlerized. Lulu is outraged; she walks out on the project, on her job, and on Tad.

At this melodramatic point, Groff's dialogue seems to lose its sinew, and her story implodes into a sort of seriocomic emotional mishmash. Lulu and Tad reunite and collaborate on a better version of the script. "We'll fight to sneak in a thing or two or three, things that matter to us, into people's homes," Tad says, with a sort of agitprop gusto. At the finale, a scene from the film is projected in black-and-white, as if on a television screen. "All the performances are first rate," the stage directions say. Who knew? As written and directed here, the scene is hardly a victory. In its mediocrity, it seems to demonstrate the irony of both Ruby's and Lulu's naïveté about the media's democratic possibilities. This society is not free but spellbound. "Ruby Sunrise," for all its liberal sympathies, does nothing to resolve the central conundrum of commercial television: the air is owned and the networks exist to sell the audience to the advertisers. ♦

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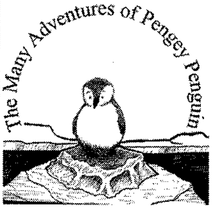

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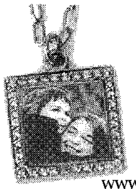

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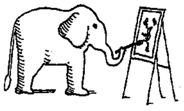

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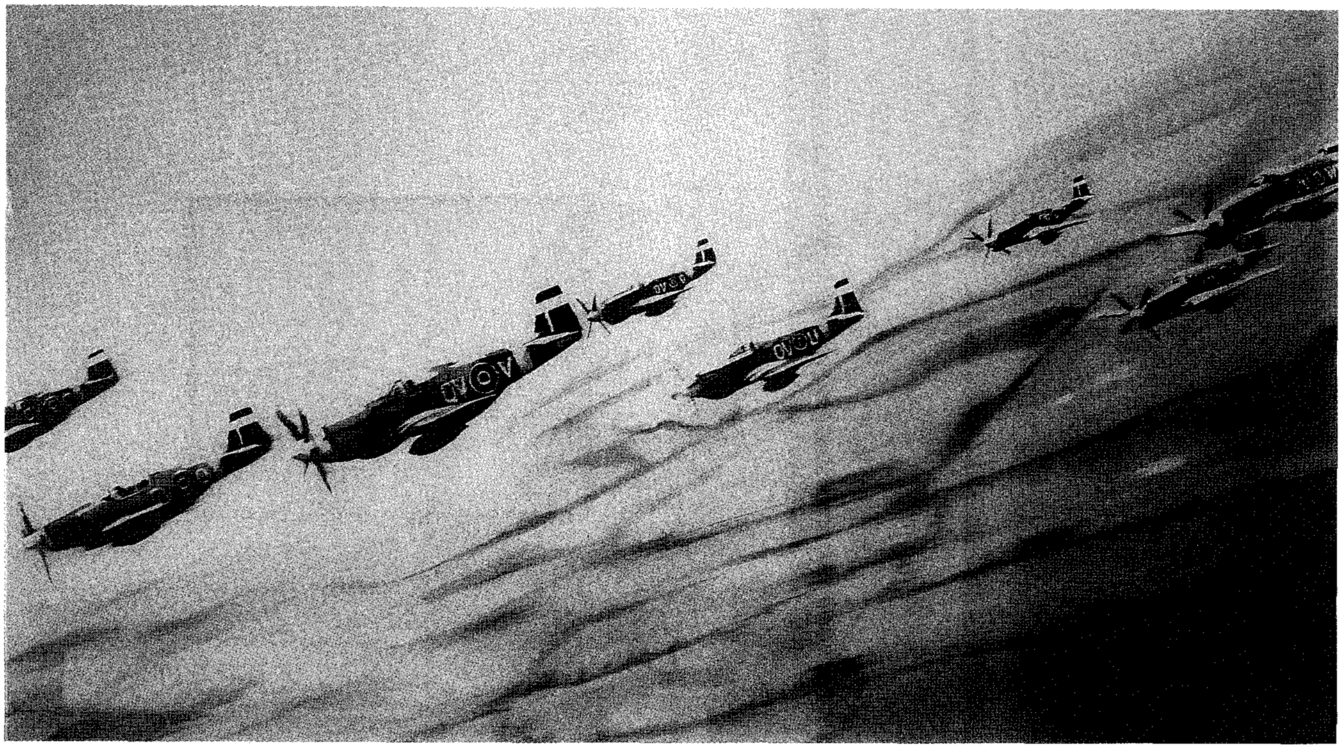
THE ART WORLD

IN THE MOOD

New works by Gerhard Richter.

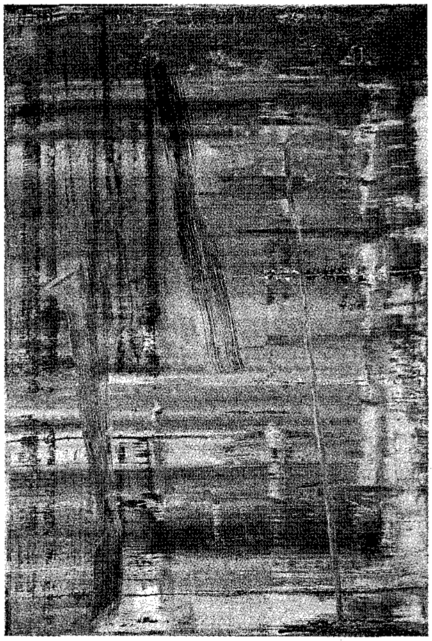
BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

The great and sly German artist Gerhard Richter has inserted a rare note of political provocation into a large show of recent mostly abstract works at the Marian Goodman Gallery. It comes in a photograph of his well-known painting of Second World War P-51 Mustang fighter planes. Richter made the painting from an old photograph in 1964, during the early, Pop-art-influenced phase of his multifarious career. In greenish grisaille with a zone of reddish tint, eight of the sinisterly elegant war machines, bearing British insignia, appear to execute a shallow dive above indistinct farm fields. (Actually, they are flying level; the framing point of view has a rakish tilt.) The Mustang (which, perhaps not incidentally for Richter's present purpose, would share its name with the iconic American fun car) was a long-range craft that escorted Allied bombers over Germany. Mustangs played a murderous role in the February, 1945, firestorm attack on Dresden, strafing survivors of the initial bombing who were massed on the city's riverbanks. From some thirty miles away, Richter, as a boy of thirteen, witnessed the glow in the night sky of Dresden's immolation.



All of that, perhaps galvanized in response to current events, may figure in Richter's choice to interrupt with a distant drone of malevolent engines a show that is otherwise devoted to varieties of silent, solemnly lyrical aestheticism. But I have learned from long experience that every attempt to pin this artist down, about anything, is doomed to bafflement. Richter is always emphatically unclear. The critic Sanford Schwartz has called him "the Master of the Blur," citing the one stylistic device common to most of his pictures, whether abstract or realist: a sideways paint smear that destroys sharp visual contours and, implicitly, confident discriminations in thought and feeling. Richter's most politically tinged work, the death-ridden suite of paintings "October 18, 1977" (1988), about the West German Baader-Meinhof terrorists, has generated more discursive heat while shedding less light of common understanding than anything else in the art of the past half century. His elusiveness is a matter of anti-ideological principle, formed in reaction to his childhood in the Third Reich, as the son of a Nazi Party member, and to his youth and training as a Socialist Realist painter, in East Germany. (He defected in 1961, when he was twenty-nine.) Granted, that elusiveness can exasperate. The critic Jed Perl began a now famous review of Richter's retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, in 2002, "Gerhard Richter is a bullshit artist masquerading as a painter."

Perl suggests a commonsensical point: why should anyone care what a painter thinks? Thinkers think. Painters should just paint. Would that the world were so orderly. Richter's life and times forced thought upon him, complicating a reverence for painting that stands guard against uses of the medium, even by himself—as propaganda, for example—that would violate its mysterious integrity. Note that the "Mustangs" in this show is a copy of a copy—a quoted quotation that suggests, but hardly imposes, a new or updated, ad-hoc meaning for the image. It's a measure of the artist's usual compunction that so slight a gesture startles. At any rate, Richter wouldn't count if he didn't love painting and didn't paint beautifully, in ways imbued with a melancholy acknowledgment of the medium's historic decline since it last peaked, in Abstract Expressionism. (Go argue with that. Perl really can't. His idea of the right stuff in painting is frankly nostalgic. To prove Richter's obloquy with a comparison, he cites Balthus.) Richter is a master, the best alive, who doubts the present value and future possibility of mastery in painting. In his art, he holds beauty hostage to skeptical intelligence from which the viewer's patience partially, but never fully, ransoms it. I've often left off looking at works by Richter, wearied by their unrelenting irresolution, but I always come back for beauty's sake.



"Mustangs" and an abstract painting, both from 2005. Richter grew up and came of age in modern regions of Hell.

The abstractions at Goodman come in two series: panel-like vertical compositions, about six and a half feet high, in a gross chiaroscuro with swaths of dark colors scraped over a ground of bright primaries; and grand, all-gray grid patterns, nearly ten feet square, based on electron-microscope photographs of silicate minerals (compounds that make up most of the Earth's crust). The first series can evoke fragments of natural landscape—forest thickets, streams at twilight, wind and rain—if you are so inclined, but with deniability built into their matter-of-fact execution. The artist will not be responsible for swoons in the viewing public. He may finish a picture with overlaid, long, flaccid brushstrokes, cancelling effects that have threatened to get out of hand—to become cheesily expressionistic or picturesque. The effects fascinate him, plainly. He just doesn't know how to mean them, and his honesty prevents him from pretending otherwise. To be enjoyed in these works is Richter's taste: exquisite painterly pleasures that he observes and selects, as his rote process unfolds, rather than intentionally creates. In this, he functions like a photographer: "taking" a picture of reality that only happens to have been made real by his hand. To put it another way, Richter's decisions as an artist are essentially those of an editor.

When Richter paints from photographs, his starting point is different, but he ends in the same place: disinterested spectacle. He long ago abjured the ironies that attend the appropriation of found images, such as that of "Mustangs." (The idea, promulgated by Richter's detractors, that he is invariably some sort of Duchampian trickster dies hard. It is false.) Indeed, the silicate pictures in this show, from a popular-science magazine, are his first since the Baader-Meinhof series which derive from photographs that are not his own. (Apart from them, only one small, fuzzy landscape continues the intermittent practice of photo-realism, which has produced Richter's most straightforwardly beautiful paintings, including memorably ravishing portraits from snapshots of his daughter Betty and his third wife, Sabine Moritz.) These new works are drastically funereal: materialized dread in a wallpaper-like, decorative design. The first picture painstakingly represents hundreds of neatly arrayed units of dark circles on a whitish ground, each split in three equal parts by a less dark glyph that resembles the Mercedes-Benz logo upside down and recalls the international symbol for dangerous radiation. No brushstrokes are visible. The over-all pattern, generating a subtle optical shimmer, affects like an audible, ominous hum. Subsequent canvases subject the image to progressive out-of-focus blurring, which is not to say that they abate its sensational oppressiveness. To those who have found his work depressing, Richter here as much as says, "You don't know the half of it." The mood is self-consciously so extreme as to be touched with humor, of a more-than-gallows variety. You forget to laugh.

Richter grew up and came of age in modern regions of Hell, sustained by an identification with traditions of Western art that his mother, the daughter of a concert pianist, inculcated in him. (The vertical abstractions in the show come as close to being visual equivalents of music—with interplays of harmony and dissonance and qualities of pitch, timbre, and sonority—as paintings can.) For him, as for other young Germans of his time who rejected their fathers, the traditions were broken. American painting by such artists as Pollock and Warhol showed his generation how to begin again, though in a void of meaning. The German response to Pop art, Capitalist Realism, which Richter participated in, savored things seedy and sad in the image bank of popular culture—it was brilliant but sepulchral, about loss. Richter's subsequent recastings of many forms and styles, abstract and representational, are like visits to a hospice of dying principles. You don't have to agree with his pessimism. (To be American, even in disastrous times, is to be hardwired against such an attitude, I think.) But Richter's authenticity is indubitable. It throws weight behind the finely calibrated hint of protest, or warning, delivered by the photograph of "Mustangs." People and things—traditions, nations—really do die in the course of history, and not always unavoidably. ♦

NEATEST TRICK OF THE WEEK

From the Rochester (N.Y.) Democrat & Chronicle.

Baritone Theodor Uppman, a veteran performer at the Metropolitan Opera, but best known for creating the title role in Benjamin Britten's opera *Billy Budd* in 1951, died Thursday at his apartment in Manhattan. He was 85. His Met debut came two years later and he went on to give almost 400 performances in 15 roles.

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MUSICAL EVENTS

THE EVANGELIST

David Robertson lifts up the St. Louis Symphony.

BY ALEX ROSS

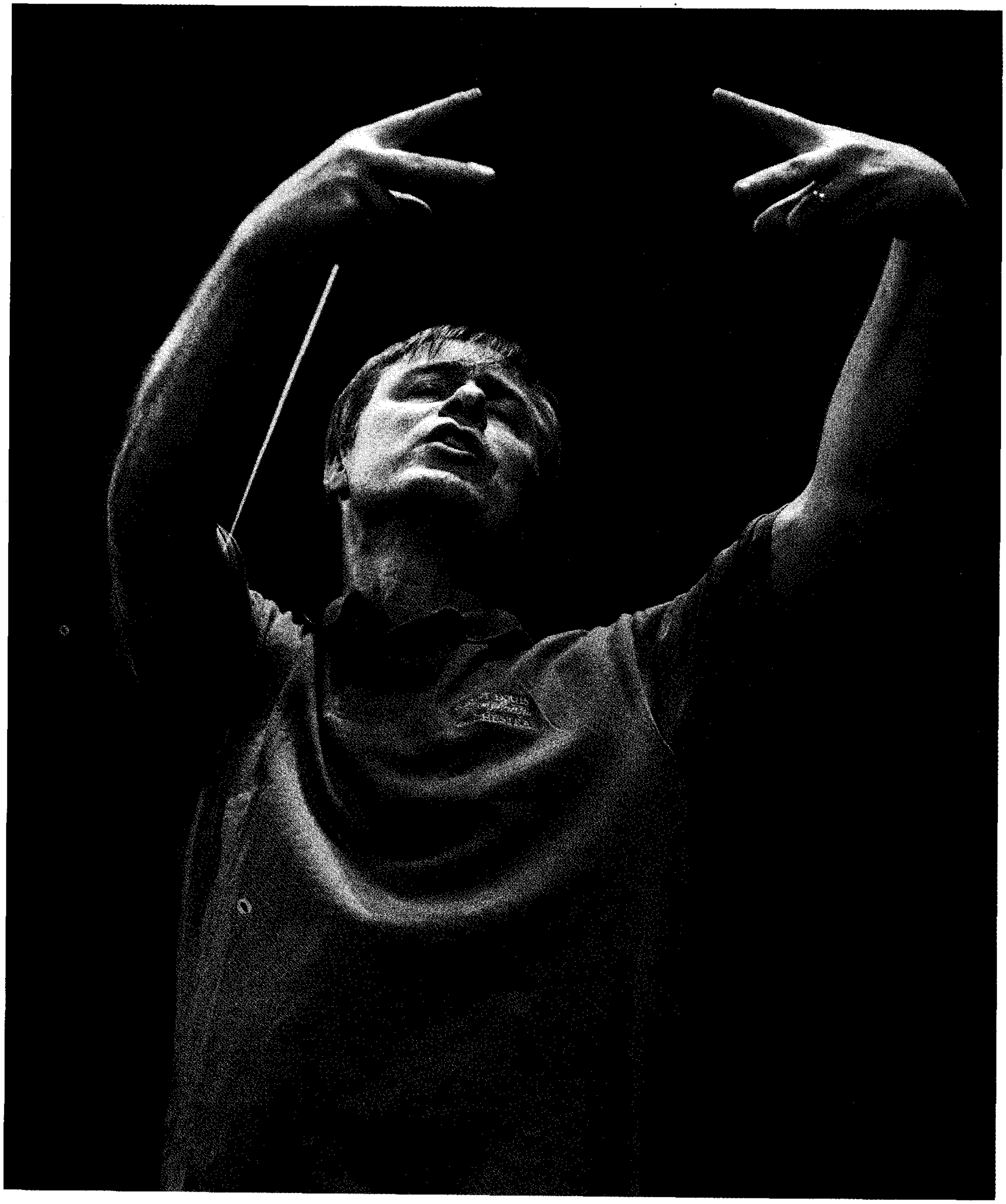
One recent morning, David Robertson, the vigorous new music director of the St. Louis Symphony, stood up in front of eighteen hundred schoolchildren in Powell Hall, the orchestra's home, to present a Young People's Concert. "My name is David," he said, in a mellifluous, singsong baritone. He introduced the instruments of the orchestra and picked out some themes from the morning's selections, the Prelude to Bizet's "Carmen" and scenes from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet." He spoke earnestly at first, but an off-the-wall sensibility crept in. During the performance of "Romeo," the conductor, who is forty-seven years old, encouraged his listeners to stamp on the floor to the thudding strong beats of the Dance of the Knights. He also proposed that a trombone figure represented Mrs. Capulet, "who's really big, and she's saying, 'Where's the food?,' and when she finds these little tiny sandwiches she gets really, really mad." If Lorin Maazel has this side to him, we haven't seen it yet.

Robertson's next appointment on this busy day was with fourteen children at Dunbar Elementary School, on the run-down north side of St. Louis. Still in high spirits, he led a sing-along and read aloud from a story about a mole: " 'I want to make beautiful music, too,' Mole said to himself." Deborah Bloom, a violinist with the St. Louis Symphony, supplied musical illustrations, culminating in the "Ode to Joy."

By 4 P.M., Robertson was at the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, a museum featuring modern art owned by the Pulitzer family, rehearsing an all-twentieth-century chamber program. The music had been chosen as counterpoint to a group of minimalist works that the Pulitzer had on display, and the concert took place that night in one of the exhibition spaces; a huge blue-and-black painting by Ellsworth Kelly hung overhead. The St. Louis players gave sensationally crisp performances of Webern's Concerto for Nine Instruments, Morton Feldman's "The Viola in My Life (1)," Karlheinz Stockhausen's total-serialist showpiece "Kreuzspiel," and David Lang's post-minimalist rave-up "Cheating, Lying, Stealing." Robertson made deft prefatory remarks, asking listeners to notice a military-march tempo in the Webern and some Bud Powell-esque piano writing in the Stockhausen. He somehow wrapped up each part of his presentation just as the last bongo drum or vibraphone was being brought on for the next stage setup.

At 10 P.M., he was still talking to patrons, elucidating Webern's twelve-tone construction with the same passion that he had brought to "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

Not long ago, the typical maestro would ride into town, bark Central European-accented commands at the orchestra, conduct some concerts, attend a banquet, and move on. These days, music directors have an expanded job description: they must not only convey the repertory to an extant audience of music lovers but also try to explain it to the great silent majority who rarely go to concerts. A singular thing about Robertson, who was born in Santa Monica, California, and has led the Ensemble Intercontemporain, in Paris, and the National Orchestra of Lyon, is that he actively enjoys his evangelical duties; not many maestros at his level condescend to lead Young People's Concerts on a Tuesday morning. He's also a brilliant musician and a master programmer. The St. Louis Symphony, which has gone through various financial crises and labor blowups in recent years, has seldom sounded so wide awake. It proved as much to New York audiences before Thanksgiving, with a strong pair of concerts at Carnegie Hall.



The mere survival of this orchestra is something of a miracle. A hundred years ago, St. Louis was the fourth-largest city in America—a Gilded Age metropolis with architectural wonders to match. Now it is ranked fifty-second, and its population is smaller than it was in 1880, when the orchestra was founded. The usual urban ills have scoured the landscape. Powell Hall stands on the edge of the old downtown; the north side of St. Louis, containing some of the poorest African-American neighborhoods in the country, lies across the street. A few blocks to the northeast is the land once occupied by the Pruitt-Igoe housing project, a notorious disaster in the history of urban planning. Now there are hopeful clusters of multifamily dwellings and low-rises amid the stretches of ruined buildings and empty lots.

What is the function of a symphony orchestra in such a world? What, exactly, are you selling at a Young People's Concert when more than thirty-five per cent of the city's children live below the

As an interpreter, Robertson is both an unpretentious enthusiast and an exacting technician. Photograph by Steve Pyke.

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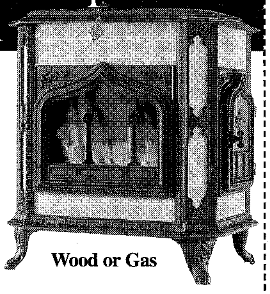

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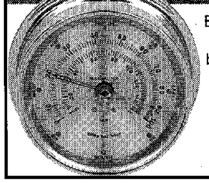

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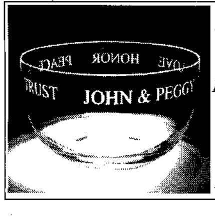

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poverty line? One thing that the orchestra can do is help fill in the gaps in arts education; many St. Louis Symphony musicians double as part-time teachers in public schools. Whether or not they succeed in building an audience for classical music, they are putting instruments into the hands of children, teasing their minds with themes and variations, and showing them unsuspected possibilities. The fact that Prokofiev is a deceased Russian gentleman mattered little when the orchestra launched into the Dance of the Knights: the rhythm was universal. When, in the latter part of that piece, the main figure came back in at low volume, the kids began stamping along to it, without any prompting from the podium. As the hall rumbled in time to the music, Robertson wheeled around, in surprise and delight.

Another part of Robertson's St. Louis strategy is to place music side by side with visual works, on the theory that the people who mob exhibitions of Matisse and Picasso should also be thronging to Ravel and Stravinsky. This was the idea of the Pulitzer concert, and both performances at Carnegie also had an audiovisual dimension. On the first program, Robertson showed slides of paintings by Monet—the "Mornings on the Seine" series and the water lilies—to illustrate Debussy's "Prelude to 'The Afternoon of a Faun' " and "Jeux." Lecturing from the podium, baton in hand, he related the ever-changing play of light in the Seine series to Debussy's habit of composing around a fixed set of figures and pitches, principally the C-sharp and G-natural that are heard in the flute in the opening of "Afternoon of a Faun." Robertson suggested that when those notes recur in the double basses, beneath an opulent new theme, we are in essence still looking at the same stretch of the musical river, except that it's now bathed in midday light.

On the second program, Robertson again focussed on Morton Feldman, an intensely visual composer who preferred the company of painters to the company of musicians. "Coptic Light," from 1986, was inspired by microscopically varied motifs in ancient Coptic tapestries. One of these tapestries was projected behind the stage as the music went on its hushed, charged course. The gimmick helped to sharpen the audience's attention; the aggressive quietude of Feldman's music often makes listeners fidget, but this time a rapt atmosphere prevailed. Still, there had been a lot of talk in two days, and it was a relief when, after intermission, Mahler's "Das Lied von der Erde" was allowed to speak for itself. Stuart Skelton and Michelle DeYoung dug into the vocal parts with uncommon urgency; the conductor relaxed his grip; and the orchestra took off.

As an interpreter, Robertson displays a split personality. On the one hand, he's an unpretentious enthusiast who devours repertory of every kind, from the classical to the avant-garde, and enjoys Wayne Shorter and OutKast on the side. At the same time, he's an exacting technician whose style was shaped by the unsentimental Pierre Boulez. To my ears, his performances have sometimes sounded too detached and angular, as if the sheer liveliness of his mind, together with his prodigious memory and ear for detail, were making the musicians antsy. I wish he'd let more of the notes sing straight out, instead of molding dynamics at every turn. But this "Das Lied" was warmer and more spontaneous; the St. Louis players, who lose little in comparison with better-paid counterparts in bigger cities, supplied all the necessary precision while also relishing the color and character of Mahler's score.

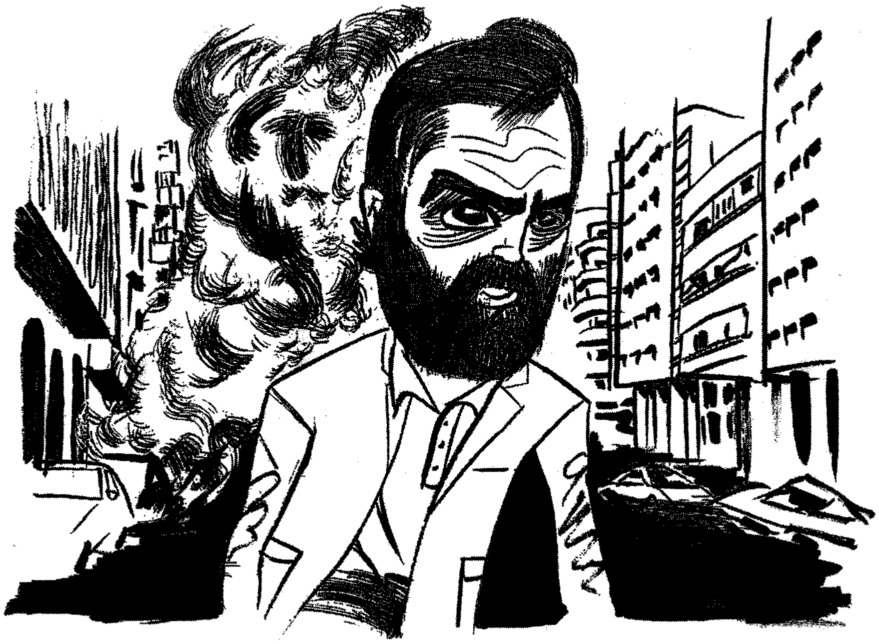
The great Chicago Symphony recently descended on Carnegie Hall like a phalanx of proud Roman soldiers, their shields glinting in the sun. The St. Louis Symphony put me in mind of artisans in studios, fashioning beautiful things by hand. Mark Sparks, the principal flutist, gave a husky tone, almost a Japanese *shakuhachi* timbre, to his dreamy solos in "Afternoon of a Faun." Jennifer Montone, the principal horn, gave an easy, sauntering rhythm to her solo in the same piece. When the orchestra unleashed its collective fortissimo, as in the first song of "Das Lied," it did not box the ears; the music never stopped singing. The St. Louis Symphony sounds like an orchestra made happy, and it is a mighty thing to hear. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

COMPANY MAN

“Syriana.”

BY DAVID DENBY



George Clooney plays a C.I.A. agent whose candor and integrity go unappreciated.

“Syriana,” Stephen Gaghan’s tense, outrageously complicated thriller about oil, the C.I.A., and the Middle East, is a major film without being a great film. It’s a strange movie, and a stunningly pessimistic one, and the strangeness and pessimism connect it (in my mind, at least) to other recent American films in ways that suggest that something unhappy in the national mood has crept into the movies. The picture was inspired by incidents in “See No Evil,” a book published in 2002 by the former field agent Robert Baer. A chatty, entertaining writer, Baer tells raffish stories about the C.I.A. in the nineteen-eighties and nineties, a time when, he claims, the agency was withdrawing the field operatives who might have prevented the September 11th attacks. The movie may also have drawn on a later book by Baer, “Sleeping with the Devil,” in which he complains that the oil companies are subverting the national interest. “Syriana” takes these worries into the present and raises the level of bitterness. In the movie, Bob Barnes (George Clooney), a field agent, is a patriot and a truth-teller, but he is aging and out of shape; his instincts for danger are not as sharp as they used to be. In a C.I.A. devoted to such things as the liberation of Iran (a chimera backed by the Administration and oil-industry movers), Bob’s candor and integrity are seen as beside the point. Like those movie gangsters who try to make one last run before retiring, he leaves Washington for Beirut, his old stomping ground, but betrayal is in the air.

Bob Barnes is set up as a conventional hero—he might be a nobly burdened figure from a le Carré novel—but it quickly appears that he’s no more than a single strand in a very thickly woven plait. Gaghan, the talented screenwriter who pulled together many juicy stories, high and low, in the drug-world narrative “Traffic” (directed by Steven Soderbergh), creates an even more fully articulated structure this time. He’s a Web-era filmmaker—distance is just a form of connection. A captain of in-

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dusty smiles, and, half a globe away, a hundred people lose their jobs; a C.I.A. technician pushes a button in Washington, and an Arab prince is taken out by a missile in the desert. The main player on this worldwide stage is a rampaging Houston-based oil company, Connex, which has lost its right to drill for natural gas in an oil emirate. In order to keep the gas flowing, Connex is merging with a small Texas company that has bribed its way into gaining similar rights in Kazakhstan. In the emirate, Connex tries to manipulate two Western-educated brothers who are rivals for the throne: Prince Nasir (Alexander Siddig), a reformer who speaks of a parliament and open markets but wants the American oil companies and military thrown out of his country; and the younger Prince Meshal (Akbar Kurtha), a svelte, boastful schemer who wants them to stay put. For the Americans, the stakes are keeping up gas supplies for the home market and finding new ways of supplying Europe with energy. The reward is power and wealth—a house "on the Vineyard."

All the parties in the movie—the Arabs, the C.I.A., the Justice Department, the oil companies, the law firm that services the oil companies—want the pipelines running, but the world supply is drying up, and a scramble is on to control what's left. This tumultuous historical and commercial background operates at full intensity in every scene. What Gaghan offers is not so much a story as a malaise: like the cocaine trade in "Traffic," oil is the life, the obsession, the only reality. It gets people killed, tortured, blown up, thrown on the junk heap. An ambitious young energy analyst working in Switzerland, Bryan Woodman (Matt Damon), loses his young son in a swimming-pool accident at a party the Emir throws in Marbella. Without much hesitation, Woodman parlays this disaster into a lucrative connection with the reforming prince, who, feeling guilty, wants to do the young man a favor. The analyst's wife (Amanda Peet) is shocked by his opportunism. In a key scene, Damon tries to explain himself, but he can't quite say what he means—that his veins are buzzing, because he has the chance to become a player—and, not understanding, Peet looks as if she had been kicked in the stomach.

Gaghan cuts off her rage before it comes to a boil. He constructs short, tense scenes that often end abruptly, with a nasty implication hanging in the air. He hops all over the world, and his method makes it impossible to develop anything in depth, though he handles certain physical things, like Hezbollah's rough way of welcoming guests to Beirut, with masterly violent strokes. His specialty, however, is the décor and style of power—a joshing, slightly menacing bonhomie, with cradled snifters of brandy and mutual flatteries, and then a sudden shift from charm to contemptuous bullying. Christopher Plummer, as an establishment Washington lawyer with C.I.A. connections, gives the kind of suavely insinuating performance that he's often given before. He's so good at it that there's a tendency to take him for granted, but every time Plummer is on the screen in "Syriana" there's an extra charge of danger and malice. A raft of good actors—Chris Cooper, Tim Blake Nelson, Peter Gerety—playing self-serving oilmen, demonstrate the kind of blinkered self-assurance that wipes out any contrary view of the world. The wash of ego feels accurate.

Some of the muttered talk among the heavyweights is so knowing and allusive, though, that it's hell to follow. Gaghan assumes a working knowledge of federal bureaucracies and Middle Eastern history—a rare case of a filmmaker respecting an audience's intelligence too much. As you watch the movie, with its twenty or so characters, many of them duplicitous, you have to keep reminding yourself who each one is and who he works for. It's as if you were constantly prepping for a quiz. And there are sketchy and veiled elements, too, such as the mysterious relationship between an ambitious young Washington lawyer (Jeffrey Wright), who represents Connex's interests, and his alcoholic father, who hangs around his house in a rage. If the father is in mourning because his son has sold out to the big boys, Gaghan should have given us more than a hint. Trying to sum up the corrupt, suffering world in two hours, he has spread himself too thin. It's good that he leaves the law firms and fancy hotels and takes us down to the polluted oil fields, where he introduces us to two charming young Pakistani men who live in a filthy foreign-workers compound. When the Pakistanis lose their jobs, they fall into the hands of a friendly Egyptian, who brings them to a clean white madrasa, where they are fed lamb and a mesmerizing line of anti-Western rant. But the transformation of the two from carefree fellows to suicide bombers is too quick and summary—it feels as if Gaghan were just filling out a scheme.

Whatever his follies and mistakes, Gaghan is a forceful talent. He has a sharp tongue, moral urgency, and, for a beginning director (this is his second film), an amazingly fluent way with actors. I longed for him to slow down here and there, but he does keep his perilously fragile structure taut—there are no dead spots or hollowly righteous passages. His politics may lean toward left paranoia and Hollywood indignation, but he's not a bore; he drops his clues and his dire suggestion—that the C.I.A. is an enforcer for the oil companies—and moves on. The oddness of "Syriana" is a result of its form: the many characters take what reality they have solely from their participation in Gaghan's intricate plan, and some of them get lost. Bob Barnes, for instance, is not the hero of his own movie. Betrayed in Beirut, kidnapped, and tortured (in a terrifying scene), he is then shunted aside by everyone, including, bizarrely, the filmmakers. (In order to play the role, Clooney, bearded and paunchy, has developed a new, abashed style, a look of agonized bewilderment.) In brief, this is an epic movie without a hero or a protagonist—or, rather, the protagonist is the oil business itself, which controls everyone. So much money can be made in oil, the movie says, that no one working in it would be foolish enough to behave ethically.

That perception may be why Gaghan constructed "Syriana" as he did. In narrative forms, heroic stature is achieved by a character working steadily toward a defined goal or struggling to fulfill some ideal of the self. But if good people are considered ineffectual to begin with, or, even worse, a nuisance or irrelevant, then it's virtually impossible to construct a story around their efforts. In the maze that is "Syriana," no Theseus arrives to slay the Minotaur, and the absence of a hero reminded me of the maddeningly repetitive, plotless "Jarhead." In that movie, the superbly trained warriors of the Gulf War never get into the fight. The recent "Lord of War" does have a hero—an arms trader—but he is celebrated ironically, as an irrepressible scoundrel. What's going on? In the late sixties and early seventies, the futility and the shame of the unwinnable war in Vietnam found their way, as a displaced mood, into movies that had little to do with Vietnam. "Jarhead" and "Syriana" are reflecting a similar mood about the current mess in Iraq. At the moment, mere activity has replaced storytelling, irony has replaced heroism, and the taste of victory has turned to wormwood and gall. ♦

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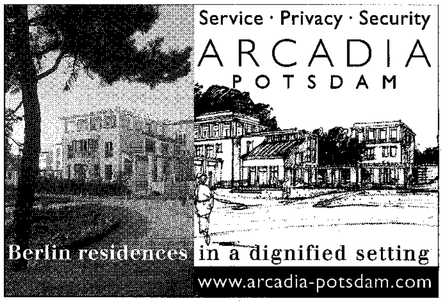

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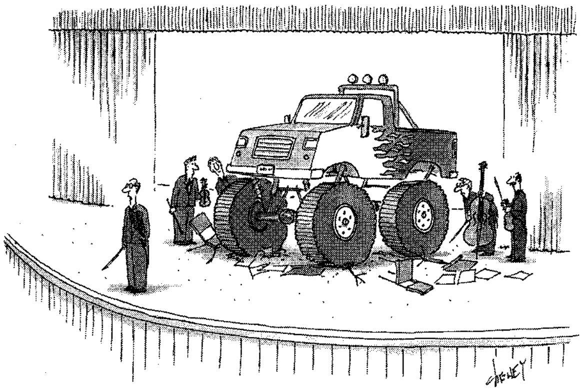
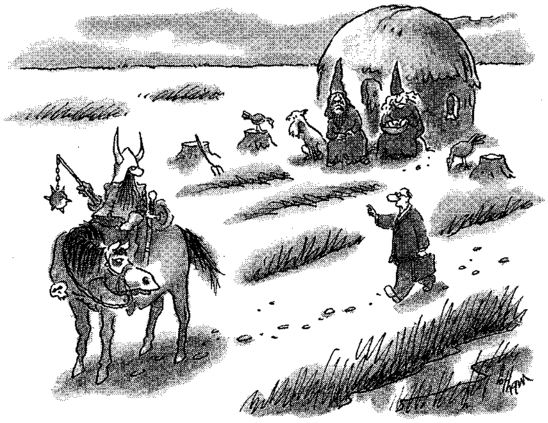
THE WINNING CAPTION



"That concludes tonight's performance of 'Pimp My Ride of the Valkyries.'"
Nancy Doig, Oakland, Calif.



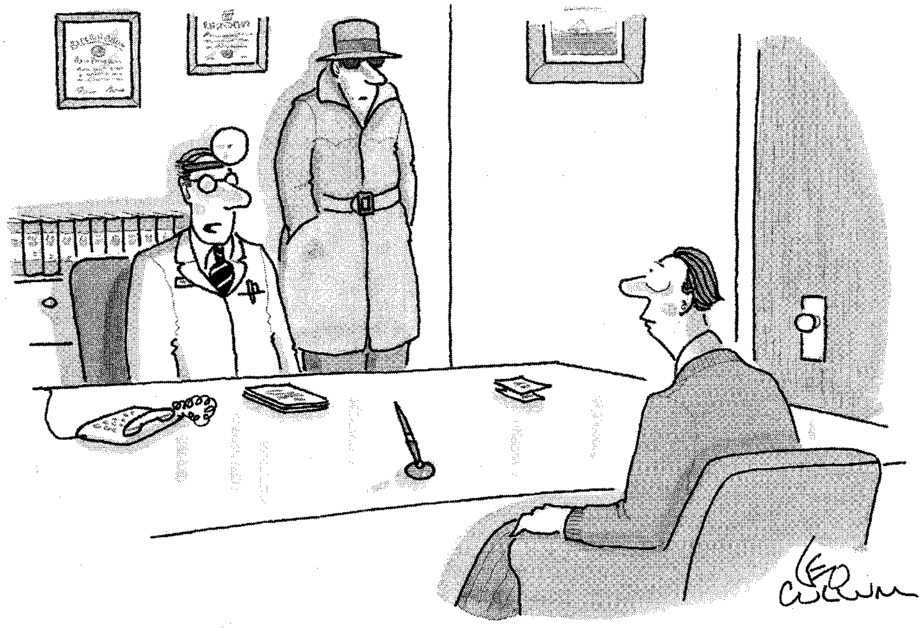
THE FINALISTS

"There goes the neighborhood."
Pam Brouwer, Santa Cruz, Calif.

"Uh-oh. That last village must have been incorporated."
Jason Bennett, Crozet, Va.

"Dibs on the briefcase."
Andrew Wilson, Ayer, Mass.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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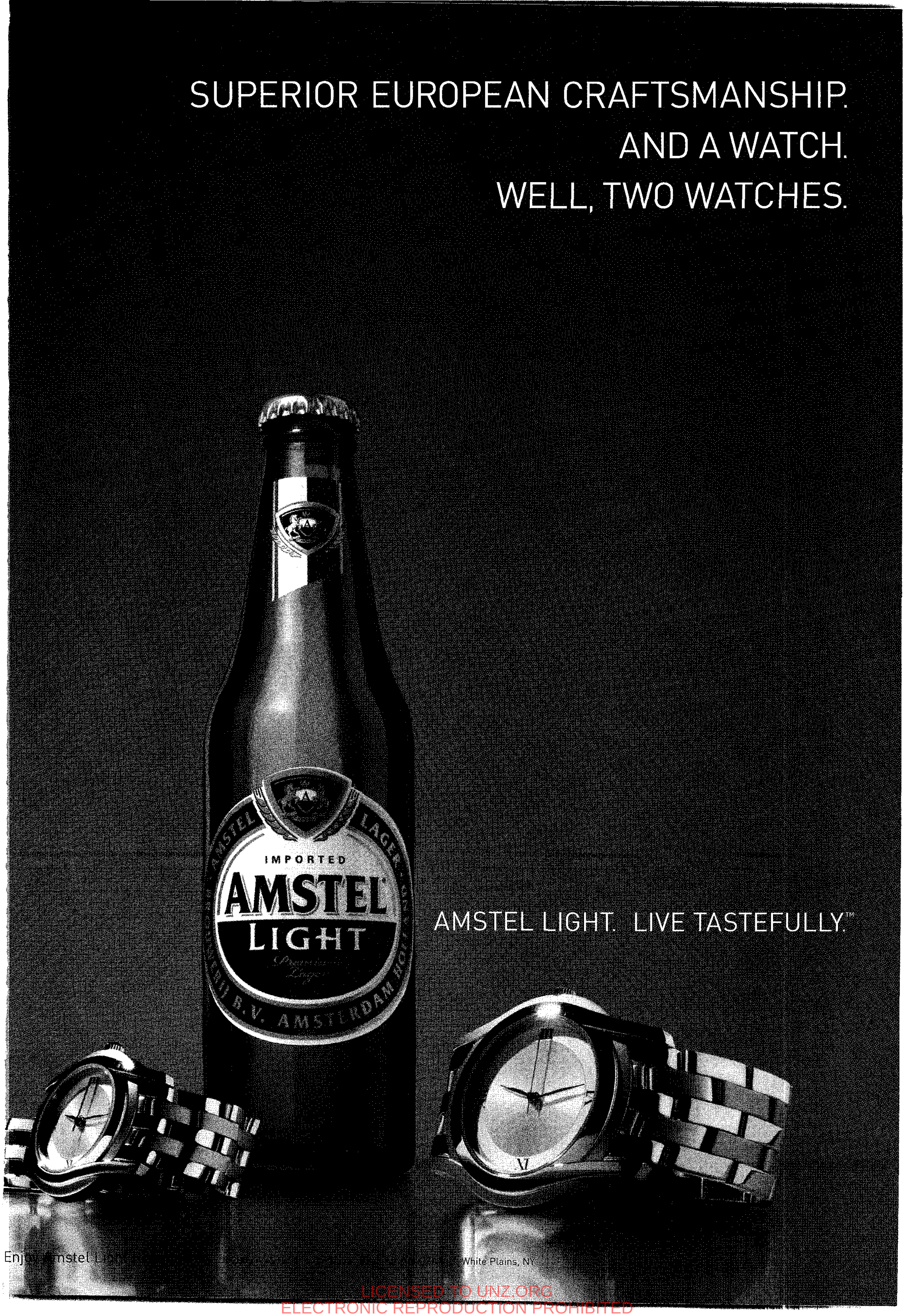
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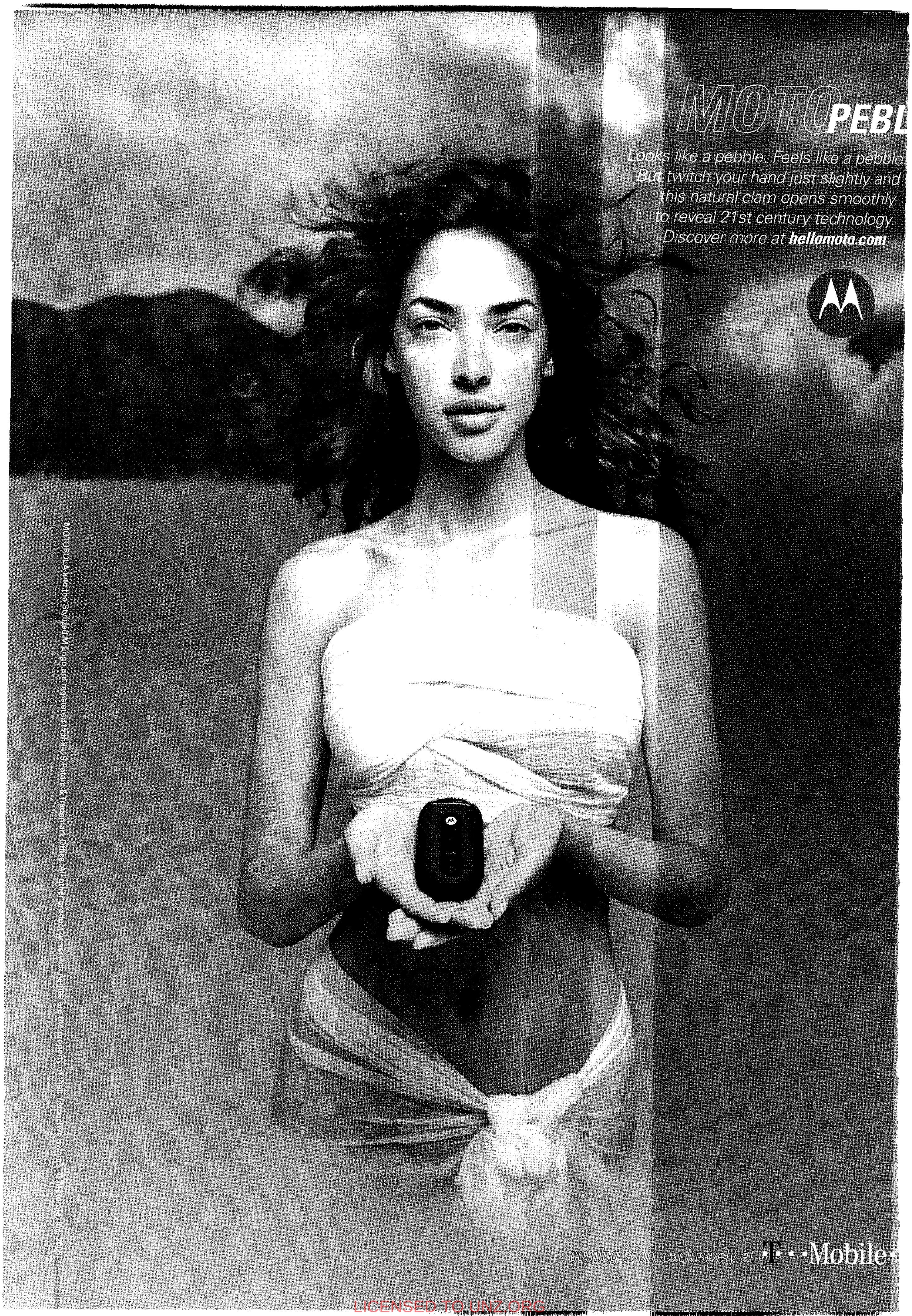

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